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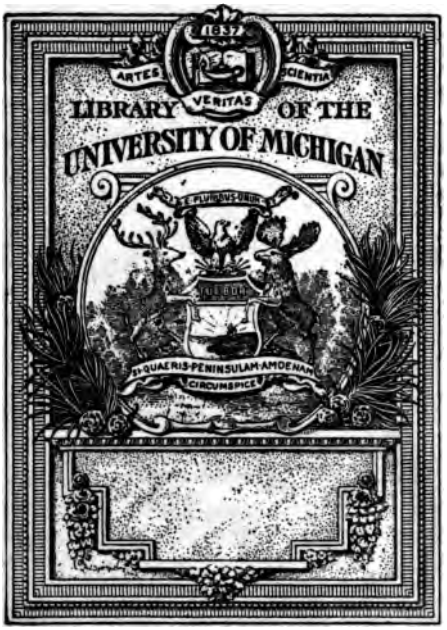
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MODERN ENGLAND

MODERN ENGLAND

A RECORD OF OPINION AND ACTION FROM THE TIME OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION TO THE PRESENT DAY

BY

ALFRED WILLIAM BENN

AUTHOR OF "THE HISTORY OF ENGLISH RATIONALISM IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY"

IN TWO VOLUMES

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CHAPTER X.

THE PUPILS OF CANNING

	PAGE
Palmerston reverses Aberdeen's foreign policy	251
And developes Canning's principles	252
Louis Philippe's peace policy	252
The Spanish marriages	253
The Revolution of 1848	254
Palmerston encourages Italian constitutionalism	254
Rise of Louis Napoleon to power	255
"The man was a scoundrel"	256
Palmerston and the *Coup d'État*	256–57
Ministerial changes	257–58
Key to the policy of Napoleon III.	258
The Eastern Question	259–60
Anti-Russian feeling in England	260–62
War provoked by Palmerston	262–64
End of Russian influence in Europe	265
Gladstone and the Neapolitan prisoners	266
Italy and the Crimean War	267
The second Chinese War	268–69
The Sepoy Mutiny	269–71
Beneficial reaction of India on the English Services	272–73
English interest in Italy	273
The Papal aggression	273–76
The Orsini bombs	276
History of Palmerston's defeat on the Conspiracy Bill	277
War for Italian freedom	278
The question of Parliamentary Reform	278–80
Object of the Radical leaders	281
Reform as a card in the party game	281
Bright's Reform campaign	282
Disraeli's Reform Bill	283
The General Election of 1859	283
Palmerston returns to office	284

193324

CHAPTER XI.

LIGHT FROM THE WEST

	PAGE
The Peace of Villafranca	285
Union of Central Italy with Piedmont	285
Liberation of the Two Sicilies	286
Part played by the English Government	287
The Volunteer movement	288
Commercial treaty with France	288
Election of President Lincoln and secession of the Slave States from the American Union	289–90
English opinion at first favourable to the North	290
Lincoln resolves to fight for the Union	290
Change of opinion in England, and its causes	291
Misapprehension of the real issue	292–93
Liberal support given to the South	294
The Queen and Prince Albert side with the North	295
The *Trent* affair	295
The *Alabama*	296
Anti-democratic prejudice caused by the American War	297
Liberalism loses ground in the Parliament of 1860	298
The Divorce Act of 1857	299
Sympathy of the working classes with the North	299
Democracy dissociated from peace at any price	300–1
Blundering foreign policy of the Government	301–3
Gladstone takes up the cause of Reform	304

CHAPTER XII.

COSMIC ECONOMY

	PAGE
Intellectual brilliancy of the Palmerstonian period	305–6
History of Evolutionism	307
Freethought at Oxford	308
Debt of biology to the social sciences	309–10
Origin of the Darwinian theory	311
Prejudice against Evolution	311–12
Spencer and Bain on the origin of reason	313
Mental development as natural education	314
Evolution and *laissez-faire*	315
Buckle's philosophy of history	316–17
Mill's doctrine of liberty	318–19
Buckle's attack on Sir John Coleridge	320

	PAGE
The Broad Church	320–21
Essays and Reviews	322–23
Prosecutions for heresy	324
Colenso on the Pentateuch	325
Inquiry set free	326
New turn given to Secularism	327
Herbert Spencer on Religion and Science	328–29
Agnosticism and Rationalism	329–30
Lecky's *History of Rationalism*	330
Ecce Homo	331

CHAPTER XIII.

A STUDY IN EXPLOSIVES

	PAGE
The General Election of 1865	332
Fenianism	333
Demand for religious equality in Ireland	334
Events in Jamaica	335
Execution of Gordon	336
Effect on English opinion	336
Position of J. S. Mill	337
The opponents and supporters of Governor Eyre	338
The cattle plague	339
The Reform Bill of 1866	340
Industrial war	341
Strikes and the Wages Fund theory	342
The working classes and the vote	343
Defeat and resignation of the Liberal Ministry	344
The Hyde Park railings	345
The compound householder and the vote	346
Disraeli concedes household suffrage	347
The schoolmaster of Falerii	348
The Royal Commission on Trade Unions	349
Attitude of the English Positivists	350
The Minority Report	351
Political enfranchisement and labour	352
Fenian outrages and the Irish Church	353
The General Election of 1868	354
Mill and the Sinking Fund	354–55

CHAPTER XIV.

TRANSFERS OF POWER

	PAGE
End of the Irish Establishment	356
Justification of the Liberal policy	357
Irish land legislation	358
The State and elementary education	359
Forster's Education Bill	360
The religious question	361
Inefficiency of the Church schools	362
Ritualism and Rome	363
University tests abolished	364
Trade Union legislation	365–66
Progress of German unification	367
Growing discredit of the French Empire	368
Luxemburg and Mentana	369
Concessions to French Liberalism	370

	PAGE
The Hohenzollern candidature	371
France and the Spanish throne	372
The Ems telegram	373
England and Belgium	374
Fall of the French Empire	375
The Black Sea Treaty	376
The Paris Commune	377
Prejudice against Trade Unionism	377–78
Anti-militarism	378–79
Army re-organisation	379
Cardwell's reforms	380
Abolition of purchase	381–82
Irish University Bill	382
The General Election of 1874	383
Disraeli Prime Minister	384

CHAPTER XV.

THE REVOLT OF LITERATURE AND SCIENCE

	PAGE
A law of compensation	385
Matthew Arnold's theology	386
Freedom of religious opinion	387
Freethought among the poets	388
Change of tone in novels	389
Evolutionary theories	390
Mill and the Darwinians	391
Clifford on *Body and Mind*	391–92
Supernatural Religion	392
Explanation of the movement against theology	393–94
Attitude of the Papacy	394
Disraeli against ritualism	395
Trade Union legislation.	396
Samuel Plimsoll	397
Exemption from service in India	398
Repeal of the twenty-fifth clause	398
Establishment of a Sinking Fund	399

CHAPTER XVI.

THE EMPRESS OF INDIA'S GRAND VIZIER

	PAGE
Sanitas sanitatum	400
Pseudo-Palmerstonian policy	401
Our friend the Turk	402
The Suez Canal	403–4
The Bulgarian atrocities	405–6
Justice *versus* Imperialism	407
The Servian War	408
A spurious Palmerston	409
Russia as liberator	410
The Balkan campaign	411
The Treaty of San Stefano	412
A dummy Congress	413
Lord Lytton as Viceroy	414
Olive branches on bayonets	415
The Afghan War	416
Annexation of the Transvaal	417
The Zulu War	418
The Prince Imperial	419
The General Election of 1880	420
The Caucus	421
Joseph Chamberlain's position	422

CHAPTER XVII.

THE LAST PALADINS

	PAGE
Bradlaugh and the oath	423–25
The case of G. W. Foote	426–27
Rise of Parnell	428–29
Lord Randolph Churchill and the Fourth Party	429–31
The Irish land question	431–33
Boycotting	433–34
Land legislation	434–36
Hares and rabbits	436
Employers' Liability Act	437–39
Compulsory education	439
Household suffrage in the counties	440
Conflict with the Lords	441
Redistribution by agreement	442
Foreign policy of the Liberals	443
Restoration of Boer independence	444
Conquest of Egypt	445
Revolt of the Sudan	446
Gordon at Khartoum	447
Afghan frontier troubles	447–48
Parnell and the Government	448
The Phœnix Park murders	448
Fall of the Liberal Government	450
The General Election of 1885	450–51

CHAPTER XVIII.

TANGLED ISSUES

	PAGE
Gladstone's third Ministry and the Liberal split	452
The Home Rule Bill	453
The General Election of 1886	454
Home Rule as a party question	455–56
It is generally supported by the Liberals	456
Gladstone's appeal to the masses	457
Intellectual majority against Home Rule	458
The argument from nationality	459
It is met by the argument from self-preservation	460
Colonial and European precedents	460–61
Home Rule as a prelude to independence	462
The Protestant appeal to England	463–64
Parnell and public opinion	465
The General Election of 1892 and the second Home Rule Bill	466
Collapse of the Liberal Government	467
The General Election of 1895	468
The Imperialist movement	468–69
The General Election of 1900 and the Education Bill	469
Passive resistance	470
Tariff reform	471–72
Character and economic policy of Mr. Balfour	473–74
Break-up and resignation of the Unionist Ministry	474
Character of the new Liberal Cabinet	475
The General Election of 1906	475–76
Its significance as a protest against reaction	476

CHAPTER XIX.

THE ECLIPSE OF GENIUS

	PAGE		
General summary . .	478–85	Absorption of intellect by the modern State .	
Increased power of the State not unfavourable to individual liberty .	486	Popular education lowers the standard of taste .	
Claim to freedom of political and religious criticism . . .	487	Artificiality of modern prose and poetry .	4
Movement of thought in the last thirty years .	487	Bad effect of luxury on literature . . .	4
Materialism and gambling	488	Stimulating effect formerly exercised by errors and abuses on men of genius . .	493–94
Progressive decline of literary genius . .	489	And, more generally, by variety and contrast .	494
Mediocrity of scientific ability . . .	489	Whereas modern progress tends towards assimilation . .	495–96
The nineteenth-century historians . . .	490	The decay of illusion unfavourable to genius	497
Decay of eloquence .	490		
New Women no Sibyls .	491		

Chapter X.

THE PUPILS OF CANNING

The fall of Sir Robert Peel's Ministry made little difference in the domestic policy of the English Government. The general principle of Free Trade received some further applications, and the freedom of the manufacturers to overwork their hands some further restrictions. Vindictive country gentlemen ceased to oppose Irish Coercion Bills that gave them no opportunity of shooting their lost leader from behind a hedge. What really made Russell's Administration differ from Peel's was the substitution of Lord Palmerston for Lord Aberdeen at the Foreign Office. The Minister who opened Mazzini's letters, and who is more than suspected of using the information thus obtained to warn Italy's oppressors of an approaching attempt to overthrow their power, was succeeded by the Minister whom Italian patriots regarded as their friend and champion. Aberdeen justified his conduct on the plea that an Italian revolution would have endangered the peace of Europe. In this nervous anxiety to preserve the *status quo* he differed widely from the imperious statesman whose policy had so nearly led to a European war seven years before. The change of Ministers initiated a series of events that subsequently transformed the face of Europe.

Bred in Canning's school, Palmerston, like

Canning, kept in view the double object of encouraging liberty and of promoting English interests abroad. Indeed, the two objects were closely connected, for a free people—especially one indebted for its freedom to England—would be less likely than an enslaved people to let itself be dragged into a war against her at the bidding of a great and ambitious military power. It might even on occasion become our ally. Besides, Palmerston, who had sat at the feet of Dugald Stewart, and whose recollections of the Terror were less vivid than those of the anti-Jacobin poet, probably loved liberty as such more genuinely than ever was possible to Canning.

Palmerston's high-handed Eastern policy had achieved in 1840 a complete diplomatic victory over France. Henceforth the French King and his Minister Guizot were systematically identified by the French Opposition writers and speakers with the principle of peace at any price. This reproach ultimately proved their ruin. To soothe French vanity they brought back Napoleon's body from St. Helena, and buried it with great pomp under the dome of the Invalides. But this vain pageant merely went to heighten the painful contrast between the glories of the Empire and the sordid bourgeois government of Louis Philippe. Then advantage was taken of the troubles in Spain to re-establish French ascendancy over the sister Bourbon kingdom. An intrigue was set on foot, and carried to an apparently successful issue, whose object was to secure the Spanish throne for an eventual descendant of Louis Philippe. One of his sons, the Duc de Montpensier, was married to

the sister and heir presumptive of the young Queen Isabella, while the Queen herself was married to her cousin, Don Francisco, by whom it was known that she could not have children. This arrangement was effected in direct violation of a previous agreement with England that Montpensier should not marry the Infanta until the Queen was married and had heirs. Possibly Guizot might have kept his word had Lord Aberdeen remained in office. His excuse is the alleged determination of Palmerston to marry Isabella to a Coburg Prince. Nothing can palliate the infamy of imposing such a husband as Don Francisco on the young Queen; but, justifiable or not, the Spanish marriages put an end to the *entente cordiale* established by Aberdeen, thus placing a powerful weapon in the hands of the French Opposition, who reproached Guizot and his master with sacrificing the friendship of England to the interests of the Orleans family.

In another way the unfortunate Louis Philippe's desire for peace hurried on his fall. At that time only 200,000 Frenchmen possessed the electoral franchise. As a consequence of this restriction, government was carried on by a system of gross corruption, frequently giving rise to open scandals. Extension of the suffrage became a watchword with the Liberal Opposition. A very moderate concession, amounting to the admission of 200,000 new electors, would have satisfied their demands. But so convinced were the King and Guizot of the popular craving for war that they refused to strengthen the representation of public opinion in the Chamber even to that trifling extent. In February, 1848, a Reform banquet was forbidden.

The people of Paris rose in arms; the National Guard showed signs of defection; Guizot resigned; the King fled, and a Republic was proclaimed.

France has been credited with the whole European Revolution of 1848, and no doubt her example greatly stimulated the movement; but in fact it had begun more than a month before, at Palermo, and had spread over the whole of Italy while Paris still lay quiescent. Pius IX., elected Pope in June, 1846, had given the first signal for reform, his accession exactly coinciding with the return of the English Liberals to office. Opposed by Austria, he expresses a wish to the English Government "to have the assistance of some person of rank and experience who might aid him by advice, and at the same time afford him the moral support of England."[1] A Whig nobleman, Lord Minto, is sent out for the purpose, with directions to visit Turin and Florence on the way, with a view to strengthening "the authority of the constitutional Governments in Italy."[2] Palmerston's instructions to this travelling agent express a strong disapproval of Austria's threatened interference with the new reforming movement. At the same time Palmerston was holding back France and Austria from forcibly interfering to help the Catholic and Jesuit-ruled cantons of Switzerland against the Federal Government. That his help, there or elsewhere, would have gone beyond words is unlikely, and he always counselled moderation to the revolutionary leaders

[1] Evelyn Ashley, *Life of Lord Palmerston*, vol. i., p. 33.
[2] *Ibid*, p. 34.

as well as to the kings. But with the credulous and excitable peoples of Southern Europe words told like gun-shots; and England probably repaid to Europe in 1848 more than her own Reform agitation owed to France in 1830.

From the beginning French democracy had been doubly compromised, by the support of the Socialists and by the support of the priests. A movement like Robert Owen's for putting co-operators in the place of capitalists had become confounded with a movement like that of the Chartists for confiscating the property of the rich. A terror more deadly than that once inspired by the guillotine took hold of the *bourgeoisie* and the peasants, and drove them to seek protection from the army and the Church. It soon became evident that political liberty could not yet co-exist with universal suffrage in France. Practically the only question was whether absolute power should be exercised by the heir of Charles X. or by the heir of Napoleon. A popular vote decided in favour of the Bonapartist candidate, Prince Louis Napoleon, who was elected President of the Republic. He had secured the support of the priests by promising to reinstate Pope Pius IX. in the temporal sovereignty of Rome, whence he had been driven, on failing as a reformer, by the Italian revolutionists. After a waiting game of three years the Prince-President used the army to destroy what little remained of French liberty. A so-called plebiscite condoned the treacherous and sanguinary means by which he had seized on despotic power, and in another year another

plebiscite made him Emperor under the title of Napoleon III.

Writing under Louis Philippe, an observer who studied and knew French society as no one else has ever known it, the great novelist Balzac, declared that absolutism would be the only cure for the prevalent corruption; and the greatest of French philosophers, Auguste Comte, hailed Louis Napoleon's *coup d'état* as a necessary and wholesome measure. Nevertheless, the author of that deed remains the most sinister figure in modern history. Most persons who retain any belief in public morality will agree with John Austin that "the man was a scoundrel," and will sympathise with Mr. Swinburne's wish to see him "kick heels with his throat in a rope." That his success saved France from civil war or from a Bourbon restoration can make no difference in our judgment on the atrocity of his crimes until it has been shown that no other means were available for that end.

Palmerston's foreign policy had been a necessary antecedent in the chain of events that led up to the Second Empire; and the *coup d'état* in its turn determined the rest of his career. Long used to the exercise of despotic authority in his own department, the Foreign Secretary roused the displeasure of Cabinet and Court by taking important decisions without reference to the wishes either of his colleagues or of the Queen and her Consort. Disbelieving in a French Republic, hating the Bourbons, and rejoicing in whatever insured their exclusion from the throne of France, he heard with satisfaction of what had been done on December

2, 1851, and frankly expressed his opinion in private conversation with the French Ambassador in London. Russell, who was Prime Minister, had gone as far; but advantage was taken of the Foreign Secretary's more responsible position to make the alleged indiscretion a pretext for driving him from office.

In a few weeks he had his revenge, and the same event gave occasion for it that had caused his fall. Many people in England feared that the new Napoleon would signalise his advent by waging a war of reprisals on his uncle's most inveterate enemy. It was thought that steam had bridged the Channel, and that an invading army might be expected to land any day without a previous declaration of hostilities. No armed force existed fit to cope with such an assailant, and a cry arose for providing some means of defence. For this purpose Russell proposed to reconstitute what was called the local militia. Palmerston moved an amendment to omit the word "local," "so as to constitute a regular militia which should be transportable all over the kingdom, and so be ready for any emergency,"[1] and carried it by eleven votes. Russell resigned, and was succeeded by a Protectionist Government, with Lord Derby at its head and Disraeli as his lieutenant in the Commons. Disraeli soon exhibited his unscrupulous versatility by declaring for Free Trade; but this apostasy did not save his party from defeat at the General Election of 1852, which resulted in the return of a slightly diminished Liberal majority. Defeated on

[1] Ashley, *Life of Palmerston*, vol. i., p. 333.

their Budget, the Conservatives resigned, and were succeeded by a Coalition Ministry composed of Whigs and Conservative Free Traders, or Peelites, as they were then called, under Lord Aberdeen as Prime Minister, Gladstone for the first time holding high office as Chancellor of the Exchequer. Palmerston went to the Home Office, where it was thought he would do no harm. This peculiar arrangement, as by the fatality of a Greek drama, brought on the Crimean War.

No mistake could have been greater than to suppose that the new French Emperor would attempt either to avenge or to emulate his uncle. Napoleon III. shaped his course on the simple principle of continuing the policy of his predecessor where it had been fortunate, and reversing it where it had been unlucky. France had entered on a wonderful career of material progress under Louis Philippe, and so everything was done to further her prosperity under the new Empire. Free speech had bred revolution; it ceased to exist. The priests had been alienated; education now passed for all practical purposes under their exclusive control. Above all, France had found herself isolated in Europe, and had got the reputation of being afraid to fight. She must therefore reassert her claims to respect, if possible in alliance with other Powers, but especially in alliance with England, resuming the *entente cordiale* which had benefited Louis Philippe so much, and avoiding a provocation like the Spanish marriages, which had cost him so dear.

An opportunity for carrying this policy into

effect presented itself before long. Simultaneously with the re-establishment of the Empire, on the strength of an obsolete treaty, and under strong pressure from the French Government, certain privileges connected with the Holy Places in Palestine were transferred by the Sultan from the Greek to the Latin priests. The Czar Nicholas took this for what it was probably intended to be—a personal provocation. He immediately advanced troops towards the Turkish frontier, and demanded in terms of studied insolence a Protectorate over all the Greek subjects of the Porte. Till then England had remained unconcerned in the quarrel. She now intervened, and henceforth took a foremost place in resisting claims which, had they been allowed, would have made the Sultan a vassal of the Czar. Our Government had the more reason to suspect such a design, as it had already received overtures from Nicholas amounting to a proposal for the partition of the Turkish Empire.

Our former Ambassador at Constantinople, Lord Stratford de Redcliffe, himself a Canning, trained in the same school as Palmerston and long his close political ally, was sent on a special mission to cope with the new situation. He encouraged the Sultan to resist Russia's claims, and greatly simplified matters by arranging an amicable settlement of the dispute about the Holy Places. Mentschikoff, the Czar's envoy, then repeated his master's demand for a Protectorate in a modified form. By Stratford's advice it was rejected, whereupon Nicholas gave orders for the occupation of the Danubian Principalities by a Russian Army. The great Powers then intervened, and nearly succeeded

in forcing Turkey to accept an arrangement which, in substance, if not in form, would have amounted to the concession of a Russian Protectorate over her Greek Christian subjects. At a hint, as is supposed, from Lord Stratford, the Sultan's Ministers declined to go beyond a promise to confirm existing treaties, and, on the Czar's refusal to evacuate the Principalities, declared war.

Napoleon III. has been accused of breaking up the European Concert, engaging France and England in a separate alliance, and acting on a deliberate system of provocation which ultimately made it impossible for Nicholas to accept a peaceful solution of the Eastern Question. But this seems to be a mistake. For that very arrangement known to history as the Vienna Note, propounded by the Powers, accepted by Russia, and rejected by Turkey, was, in fact, drawn up by Napoleon himself,[1] while the sole power that backed up Turkey in rejecting it was England—that is, the war-party in the English Cabinet, led by Russell and Palmerston, who eventually brought over the pacific Premier, Aberdeen, to their views.

Russell counted only in the Cabinet and the House of Commons. Palmerston represented the public opinion of the country. England had not forgotten the events of 1849, when the European revolution, with which she warmly sympathised as an attempt to copy her own institutions, had been so mercilessly suppressed. Now, while it was Austria that held in bondage the two nationalities towards which English sympathies were most

[1] P. de la Gorce, *Histoire du Second Empire,* vol. i., p. 187.

attracted, Italy and Hungary, it was Russia that, by intervening against the victorious Hungarian armies just when they had won national independence, re-cemented the whole fabric of Hapsburg tyranny tottering to its fall. So violent was the indignation excited that J. S. Mill, writing ten years afterwards, declared that for England to have helped Hungary would have been "an honourable and virtuous act," and for England and France acting together even a politic act, as it would have saved them from fighting Russia in less advantageous circumstances subsequently.[1]

Nor was this all. After their final defeat some thousands of proscribed Hungarian patriots had taken refuge in Turkish territory. Austria and Russia simultaneously demanded their surrender. By Stratford Canning's advice the Porte refused, and Palmerston sent a fleet up to the Dardanelles to support it. Thus the Turks came to be regarded, not only as brave men fighting for their own independence, but as champions of European freedom.

Again, a certain philosophy of history current at that time, and by no means yet extinct, taught that the world, to its great detriment, tends periodically to fall under the sway of a universal monarchy, the Babylonian Empire being the first recorded instance and the Roman Empire the last. Since then several attempts have been made to revive the system of universal domination—by the mediæval Popes, by Philip II., by Louis XIV., and by Napoleon; but all were baffled, as the English people believed,

[1] Mill, *Dissertations and Discussions,* vol. iii., p. 177.

almost entirely by English vigilance and courage. For many years past an apprehension had been gaining ground that Russia was preparing to play the old game over again—had, indeed, been playing it with such success that her work might be considered as half done. Sweden, Poland, Turkey were partially devoured, Austria and Prussia reduced to vassalage, India and China threatened, the United States made a fawning sycophant. Ought not England once more to fulfil her historic mission and strike down the Colossus with the feet of clay?

According to another philosophy of history, the civilised nations were periodically overwhelmed, and always threatened, by inundations of northern barbarism. Rome had succumbed to the Goths and Vandals, China to the Tartars; mediæval Christendom narrowly escaped being crushed by Genghis Khan. Popular ethnology classed the Russians as Mongols, descended in some way from the hordes of Attila, and destined to spread the same devastation over Europe unless prompt and energetic means were taken to restrain their encroachments. Some fatalists thought resistance useless; but the majority were not of that opinion.

Lord Palmerston was not a philosophic historian, but he had been bred up to believe in the Balance of Power; he thought that Russia, in possession of Constantinople, would be a danger at once to the future liberties of Europe, to British trade in the Levant, and, more remotely, to British empire in India. Probably he calculated that, having to fight her sooner or later, it would be safer to fight now, with France as our ally and the German

Powers neutral, than at some future time in less favourable circumstances.

It seems, therefore, that now as afterwards in three great crises of European policy Napoleon III. found himself duped by a more astute politician than himself; that Palmerston manœuvred him into the Russian war of 1854, as Cavour was to manœuvre him into the ultimately ruinous Italian war of 1859, and Bismarck into the fatal neutrality of 1866 and into the annihilating ambush of 1870. In return for being made the tool of England's policy he got the recognition of Queen Victoria for himself and for the fair adventuress who shared his throne, as her equals and her friends.

Had Palmerston been Prime Minister, or even Foreign Minister, his warlike attitude, supported as it was by the French Government, might have averted war. But the known peace principles of Lord Aberdeen and of his chief lieutenant, Gladstone, effectually screened the guiding hand of the Home Secretary. Similarly, the passionate desire of the English people to strike down the destroyer of European liberty was screened behind their more ostentatious exultation in the triumph of peace and industry recently signalised by the Great Exhibition of 1851, the more so because the Free Trade leaders, Cobden and Bright, now eloquently advocated the cause of non-interference.

Turkey's declaration of war was followed by an advance of the English and French fleets to Constantinople, ordered at the suggestion of Napoleon III., with Palmerston's full approval. Russia, in perfect conformity with her rights as

a belligerent, replied by destroying the Turkish squadron at Sinope. Then, again under pressure from the French Emperor, the allied fleets received orders to advance into the Black Sea, and to drive all Russian ships back into port. This step involved a breach of international treaties; it amounted to a beginning of hostilities, and did actually bring on war. It had been approved of during the temporary retirement of Palmerston, who, for reasons not yet explained, had left the Ministry. But his absence told for more than his presence, if we are to believe what Kinglake supposes, that "the very apprehension of having him for an adversary weighed heavily on the decision of his late colleagues."[1] In a few days he had returned to office, stronger than before.

By their aggressive action in the Black Sea England and France separated themselves from the German Powers, and so exasperated the Czar that he disregarded their summons to evacuate the Danubian Principalities, and war ensued. It need not have lasted long, for, under pressure from Austria, the Russian troops soon afterwards recrossed the Pruth, their place being taken by an Austrian army of occupation. This, however, did not satisfy the allied Western Powers. Unwilling to bring back their fleets and armies without striking a great blow, and believing the present to be a unique opportunity for crippling their enemy, they resolved to invade the Crimea, to sink the Russian fleet, and to destroy the great fortress of Sebastopol, by which Constantinople was permanently

[1] *Invasion of the Crimea*, vol. ii., p. 27.

threatened. It is said that the idea of a Crimean expedition first originated with Napoleon III., but only acquired fixity when taken hold of by Palmerston's more energetic will.

Under more efficient leadership, the purpose of the Allies would have been accomplished a few weeks after their united forces were disembarked in the neighbourhood of the great Russian fortress. As it was, they succeeded; and, although untoward circumstances postponed the fall of Sebastopol for nearly a year, politically the delay proved no misfortune, for that long struggle ended with the complete exhaustion of Russia, the loss of her military prestige, and her exclusion from all share in the rearrangement of the Western world. Palmerston's dream of a regenerated Turkey—not shared by the better-informed Stratford de Redcliffe—led, indeed, only to more misgovernment, waste, and misery; but the embryo nationalities of the Balkan Peninsula have gained in the long run by an intervention which has ultimately secured them a larger autonomy than would have been compatible with their incorporation in the empire of the Czar.

Such were some of the ulterior effects of the Crimean War. Its immediate effect on home politics was to lay bare the gross inefficiency of our aristocratically organised administration. Military maladministration was no new thing; it had raged through the French War. The new thing was its speedy exposure, due in this instance to the *Times* correspondent in the Crimea, the late Sir William Russell. Popular indignation turned itself, in the first instance, not against the faulty system, but against the Government of Lord Aberdeen, which

resigned after a vote of censure in the House of Commons. Palmerston, the national choice, succeeded Aberdeen as Premier; and, after a little delay, the whole Peelite section of the Cabinet followed its chief, leaving the more warlike Whigs in sole possession of power.

Among the seceders was W. E. Gladstone, already at that time, "without dispute and beyond rivalry, the first man in the House of Commons."[1] Some months later he advocated granting peace to Russia on terms less onerous than those accepted by her after the fall of Sebastopol. It so happened that a few years before these events, in the course of an Italian journey, Gladstone's attention had been drawn to the frightful way in which the Neapolitan Liberals were treated by their Sovereign, King Ferdinand, 20,000 of them being kept in dungeons as political prisoners. Among others, Carlo Poerio, who had been Minister of Public Instruction under the Liberal Government of 1848, was found "chained to a murderer, and suffering terrible privations."[2] Gladstone exposed this state of things to all Europe in a pamphlet which, though it did not procure the liberation of the sufferers—they were only released in April, 1859—ultimately contributed to the independence and unification of Italy. But apparently he did not grasp the solidarity of interests linking Bourbon tyranny with Russian power. Yet the connection seemed obvious enough, and was pressed on his

[1] *The National Review*, vol i., p. 423 (1855).

[2] Herbert Paul, in the *Dictionary of National Biography*, Supplement, vol. ii., p. 285. Mr. Paul erroneously gives the date of Poerio's release as 1852.

notice by a candid friend in a new organ of public opinion just then beginning to appear.[1]

Already, indeed, the greatest of Italian statesmen had caught this connection, and had begun to utilise the war against Russia for the benefit of Italian independence. In April, 1855, Count Cavour sent 15,000 Piedmontese troops to the assistance of the Allies in the Crimea, placing them under the orders of the English general. They took part in the last battle fought before Sebastopol fell; and, although on that occasion the French did nearly everything, the Italians were allowed to claim far more than their proportionate share of the honours of victory. A Catholic orator, Montalembert, denounced in the French *Corps Legislatif* the danger to European Conservatism of this alliance with Austria's revolutionary enemy, but his warnings passed unheeded.[2] In the Congress held at Paris in 1856 to arrange a Treaty of Peace, Cavour sat officially as the representative of Sardinia, virtually as the representative of all Italy. He took advantage of his position to bring Italy's wrongs before Europe; Count Walewski and Lord Clarendon, the French and English Plenipotentiaries, supported his attack on Austria; and, although nothing came of it at the moment, a deep impression remained that something must be done for Italy, and that the Powers which had overthrown Russia were her friends.

While in Europe England had shone for fifty

[1] *National Review, ut supra,* pp. 427–28. The article is evidently by R. H. Hutton.

[2] De la Gorce, *Histoire du Second Empire,* vol. i., p. 376.

years as the champion of right and liberty against oppression, England as an Asiatic Power continued to appear in a somewhat less favourable light. At the close of the Crimean War we find her attacking Persia, in pursuance of a quarrel for which her own Minister at Tehran was chiefly responsible. Before the conclusion of this discreditable affair our agents at Hong Kong committed a much worse outrage on Chinese rights. A certain vessel called the *Arrow*, belonging to a Chinese merchant and manned by Chinese sailors, had, with doubtful propriety, been authorised to fly the British flag. This privilege, whatever its justification, had been merely temporary; and ten days after its expiry Chinese officials boarded the *Arrow* and took away her crew, on the plea that some of them had been guilty of piracy. Sir John Bowring, the Governor of Hong Kong, demanded their surrender, and, on its being refused, the forts guarding the approaches to Canton were attacked and taken. Yeh, the Chinese Commissioner, then restored the crew, but demanded that those accused of piracy should be given up to Chinese justice, besides refusing to apologise for his proceedings. Then came fresh claims and further hostilities, Bowring's whole attitude being apparently modelled on the behaviour of Russia to Turkey, which had recently excited so much indignation in English breasts.

It excited some indignation even when the bully happened to be an Englishman. Palmerston, who made a rule of backing up his agents whether right or wrong, defended Bowring; but a vote of censure moved by Cobden and supported by Russell, Gladstone, Disraeli, and the whole Conservative

party, passed the House of Commons by sixteen votes, Charles Greville, a rather cynical man of the world, "rejoicing, for the honour of the country, that it had condemned this iniquitous case."[1] The country, however, held a different view of its honour, and, on an appeal to its judgment, gave a triumphant majority to the policy of the popular Minister; the leading advocates of peace, Cobden, Bright, W. J. Fox, and Milner Gibson, who had also headed the Anti-Corn-Law movement, all losing their seats. In the war subsequently carried on with varying fortune, until the final submission of the Chinese in 1860 to the united forces of England and France, we had just complaints to make of their cruel and treacherous conduct. By way, it is to be supposed, of civilising them, the treaty of peace provided that the opium traffic should thenceforth be legalised, and that the duty on it should be fixed at ten instead of twenty per cent., the rate which the Chinese Government vainly entreated us to permit.

Our differences with China would have been settled sooner but for the diversion of the forces first intended for service in that quarter to meet the more pressing necessities of India. So denuded indeed was India of European soldiers, owing to the requirements of the Crimea, that, but for their timely help, a formidable mutiny, which had broken out in the East India Company's Native Bengal army, might have necessitated the entire reconquest of the Peninsula. Discontent had for some time been growing. A policy of territorial aggrandisement, pursued by a series of Governors-General,

[1] *The Greville Memoirs,* Part III., vol. ii., p. 95.

culminated in Lord Dalhousie's annexation of Oudh, against treaty obligations, and on grounds that would equally have justified the Czar in seizing on Constantinople. And the extension of our sway had become associated with the suspicion of designs against the religion of the people. It had been part of the policy pursued by the East India Company in the eighteenth century strictly to forbid any approach to Christian proselytism among the Hindoos. But the Evangelical movement, manifested among other forms by a vast increase of missionary activity, had led first to the establishment of an ecclesiastical organisation to meet the spiritual needs of the civil and military establishment, and then to direct efforts, in which even some officers took part, to spread Christianity among the natives.

Matters came to a crisis when, by an act of stupid official negligence, cartridges were served out to the Sepoys, greased with a mixture of cow's and swine's fat. Before using the cartridges, their ends had to be bitten off. Now, for a Hindoo to put either cow's or swine's fat into his mouth involved loss of caste in the present life, and eternal damnation in the life to come; while defilement with pig's fat alone would render a Mohammedan liable to no less serious penalties. A rumour spread and obtained universal credence that the greased cartridges were designed for the express purpose of destroying the soldiers' caste, and compelling them to embrace Christianity. It would have been difficult to disabuse the Sepoys of this belief without having recourse to arguments which might have been turned with fatal

effect against the doctrine of Original Sin as then held by nearly every adherent of the creed it was thought so desirable for them to embrace.

After simmering for five months, discontent turned to mutiny and massacre in May, 1857. Oudh, so unjustly seized, proved the focus of disturbance and disaster. John Lawrence saved the Punjaub, and native troops from the Punjaub saved India. Colin Campbell, arriving with reinforcements from England, completed the work of restoring order, and in a year from its beginning the Mutiny was over. Lord Canning, the Governor-General, a son of the great Minister, showed, perhaps, less promptness of decision than the situation demanded; but his courage was unshaken, his confidence wisely bestowed, and his mercifulness, amid a storm of vindictive passion, inflexibly maintained.

Throughout the whole of this tragic episode one is struck by the great superiority in ability and efficiency of the Indian over the English administration, due, no doubt, to its being less hampered by the survival of mediæval institutions. It is worth noting that not one of the three great men just mentioned belonged by birth to the aristocratic caste. Lawrence's father was colonel in a marching regiment; Colin Campbell's father was a Scotch carpenter; while the statesman from whose widow Canning inherited his peerage had been stigmatised as an adventurer by high-born Whigs and Tories alike. Finally, he whom public opinion singled out as the fighting hero of the whole war, Havelock, was the son of a Sunderland shipbuilder. People observed with a mixture of amusement and

indignation that the same *Gazette* where Havelock's promotion to the rank of K.C.B. appeared announced the bestowal of the same honour on a certain courtier named Phipps, a relation of Lord Normanby, popularly supposed to have earned it by his zeal in supplying the Queen with entertaining gossip from the newspapers.

In view of such facts, it might seem no gain, at least for India, that the Mutiny led to a transfer of authority from the East India Company to the Crown. But while the conduct of Indian affairs on relatively rational principles does not seem to have suffered, but the contrary, from a revolution less momentous in reality than in appearance, the State as a whole has gained. As a consequence of the Mutiny, the contingent of European troops in the Indian Army has been considerably augmented, thus affording enlarged opportunities of military training and experience to English officers. And, what is equally important for East and West, the transference of India to the Crown, or, in other words, to the complete control of our elected Parliamentary Government, has carried with it the transference of appointments in the Indian Civil Service from interest to ability. It had been a part of Macaulay's reconstitution of the Indian Government that its Civil Service should be opened to the public by means of competitive examinations. But this provision had been allowed to remain dormant, and, although re-enacted in 1853, was now for the first time, at J. S. Mill's recommendation, fully enforced.[1] Under the stress of Indian example,

[1] Molesworth, *History of England,* vol. iii., p. 142.

the same principle soon extended itself to the English Civil Service, to the scientific army services, and finally to the whole army.

Whatever importance may belong to the reaction of Asiatic interests on the policy and public opinion of England, the influence exercised by Continental affairs counted for much more. We have seen how the Crimean War arose as an indirect consequence from English sympathy with the unsuccessful revolutions of 1848, and from the change of dynasty brought about in France by the events of that year. Italian liberty, made possible once more by the ruin of Russia's European domination, now took the place of the Eastern Question as the centre of European interest and the determining antecedent of all further political progress.

Italy numbered more sympathisers in England than anywhere else. Many English travellers had carried home happy memories of her cities, mountains, and seashores; others had made her a second home, and had intermarried with her people. Italian refugees found England their safest European asylum; it was not forgotten that Bentinck had given Sicily a free constitution in 1812; quite recently Palmerston had sided with the national movement of 1848. Both countries had even a common enemy in the Papacy, although the causes of their hostility differed widely enough. A year after his restoration to the temporal sovereignty of Rome by French bayonets, Pius IX. had thought fit to divide England and Wales into twelve Bishoprics, with the celebrated Dr. Wiseman (the original of Browning's Bishop Blougram), as

Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster, at their head. There were at that time considerably under a million Roman Catholics in England, mostly Irish or of Irish parentage, and the new episcopate seemed rather in excess of their spiritual requirements. But the secessions from Protestantism to Rome that followed the decline of the Tractarian movement, although a vanishing quantity as compared with the total population, seemed numerous enough to justify the credulous ecclesiastical imagination in hoping for conversions on a larger scale in the near future. Anyhow, the Papal Brief creating the new episcopal organisation described it as a measure for "re-establishing and extending the Catholic faith in England."[1] Even so, however, English Protestants, with their innumerable missions for converting the world in general and Roman Catholics in particular to what they called the pure Gospel, should have been the very last religious body to complain of similar proceedings when adopted, without the slightest attempt at concealment or constraint, to win them over to what a majority of Christians considered the only true faith. And if, as they alleged, their own religion rested on reason, it had nothing to fear from the unaided show of authority among such a reasonable people as the English were supposed to be. But in fact the current Biblicism had no such basis; it rested, like the rival creed, merely on authority and prescription; it had been established by force at the Reformation, and it quivered to the centre when challenged by a more imperious

[1] Walpole, *History of England*, vol. v., p. 421.

voice than any that its accredited representatives could raise in reply.

Probably the Whigs, who then ruled England, if they had fallen back from the complete religious unbelief of Holland House, looked in their hearts on all additions to pure Deism as so much superstition. Publicly they went some length in the Liberal direction. We have seen how Lord John Russell made Hampden a Bishop in spite of a protest signed by half the episcopate. Palmerston, as Home Secretary, at a time when cholera was raging, replied to an application from the Edinburgh Presbytery for the appointment of a national fast by suggesting that appropriate measures of sanitation would furnish a more efficacious check to the ravages of the disease; and he subsequently gave great scandal to the whole Evangelical party by informing a labourers' meeting that "all children were born good."[1]

Party leaders so scornful of superstition in general were particularly impatient of superstition when it appeared under an anti-national form. Lord John took the opportunity of combining the Pope and the Puseyite clergy in a common denunciation addressed to the Bishop of Durham. Amid much confusion he brought in a Bill forbidding the assumption of territorial titles by the Pope's new Bishops, and annulling all gifts or bequests made to them under such titles. The second provision, which alone mattered, had to be withdrawn. The first provision became law, but was never obeyed, and has since been repealed. Ministers and people

[1] Ashley, *Life of Palmerston,* vol. ii., p. 15.

covered themselves with ridicule, while Cardinal Wiseman kept up his dignity throughout. But a feeling of soreness remained, and England became more the friend of Italy than ever from having been involved in a discreditable conflict with their common enemy, the Pope.

Cavour would have preferred an English to a French alliance, but in the circumstances it was totally impossible; Austria could more easily have supported the Sepoy Mutiny than we could have sent an army to Lombardy. Napoleon III. hesitated long, and might never have made up his mind had it not been made up for him by Italian assassins. As the imperial pair were driving to the Paris Opera on the evening of January 14, 1858, bombs thrown by Orsini, a Roman exile, and some accomplices exploded under their carriage, killing and wounding 156 persons. Neither the Emperor nor the Empress was hurt; but the purpose of the attack was better secured by their escape than by their death. Orsini, while awaiting his doom, wrote to Louis Napoleon, whose companion in arms he had once been, entreating him to free Italy; and an appeal backed by such terrible arguments did not pass unheeded.

Orsini's attempt had been prepared and his bombs manufactured in London. The French Government asked for new legislation imposing severer penalties on the plotting of such outrages for the future. This seemed a reasonable request, and Palmerston proposed to meet it by a Bill making conspiracy to commit murder either within or without the United Kingdom punishable by

imprisonment for life.[1] Unfortunately for him, some hot-headed French colonels had used language suggesting recourse to armed invasion if their master's enemies continued to find shelter and impunity within our shores, and their angry addresses had received a sort of official sanction by being printed in the *Moniteur*. Lord John Russell and the Radicals opposed the second reading of the Conspiracy Bill on the ground that the laws of England should not be changed at the dictation of a foreign despot. It is said that Lord Derby, watching the debate from the gallery of the House of Commons, saw the unique opportunity of putting his rival in a minority, and sent down orders to the Conservatives to join the Liberal malcontents in defeating a measure of which both he and they entirely approved. The country gentlemen of England did as they were commanded; the Bill was lost by a majority of nineteen; Palmerston resigned, and Derby took his place. A trick that would have ruined any man's reputation on the racecourse put him and his party in office; but their tenure of it was insecure from the beginning, nor did it long continue.

As has been already observed, Orsini's bombs did their work more effectually by failure than they could have done it by success. In fear of a fresh attempt on his life, Napoleon III. arranged a secret meeting with Cavour at Plombières, where a plan for the expulsion of Austria from Italy by the united forces of France and Piedmont was concerted. Lombardy, Venice, and some other

[1] Walpole, *History of Twenty-five Years*, vol. i., p. 118.

territories were to be united with the Sardinian dominions into a North Italian kingdom, while Savoy and perhaps Nice were to be ceded to France. In pursuance of this programme Austria was goaded into declaring war in the following April, and almost on the same day the English Parliament was dissolved, a decisive opportunity being thus afforded to our people for showing on which side their sympathies lay; for, although the appeal was made on a question of purely domestic policy, it was practically decided by reference to the great crisis in foreign affairs.

Ten years of Chartist agitation had left behind an impression that the people were imperfectly represented. There were fewer working-men's constituencies than under the unreformed Parliament; and the supremacy of the middle classes remained much less complete than had been intended and expected in 1832. It seemed unjust that so many Englishmen should be excluded from the suffrage; nor was that the only evil complained of. Had the million voters been distributed among constituencies of approximately equal numerical strength, their representatives might have given a fairly adequate expression to the public opinion of the country. But so far was this just arrangement from being realised that a fifth of the electorate actually returned a majority of the House, the difference of voting values being sometimes as thirty to one, according to the population of the boroughs in which they were cast.

Nor was the variation a mere arithmetical curiosity of no political significance. Voters in

small constituencies were much more amenable to the influences of rank and wealth than voters in large ones; they could be more easily bribed or bullied into returning a plutocrat or a territorial magnate; while again the persons who so obtained seats in the Legislature used their power to thwart all attempts at an equitable readjustment of taxation, and to support an administrative system which threw the public service into the hands of the titled class or of their nominees.

Another evil, less noticed at the time, was the loss of legislative power caused by the tendency of parties towards a Parliamentary equilibrium. We saw how a somewhat similar state of things had become permanent in the unreformed Parliament, and how it made for utter legislative stagnation, as no Government could afford to alienate groups of members interested in the support of any particular abuse. Since the fall of Sir Robert Peel there had been, in name at least, a permanent Liberal majority, but it consisted of four different sections —Whig, Radical, Peelite, and Irish Catholic— between which it was Disraeli's policy to be always driving wedges, without any particular scruple as to the measures he advocated, opposed, or surrendered; while the art of the Liberal leaders lay in keeping them together by judicious management, in winning Opposition support by concessions to Conservative prejudices, or in bringing outside opinion to bear on the whole House by an ostentatiously national policy.

Finally, the settlement of 1832, while it made the ruling Chamber an organ of middle-class opinion, by the very act of conferring sovereignty on the

middle class, made the administrative power an almost exclusively aristocratic privilege. In advocating a wide democratic suffrage, James Mill had foretold that the poorer classes would bestow their confidence on the middle class, whom they had always taken for models and advisers; he may not have observed that the middle class in turn was similarly disposed to imitate and confide in the aristocracy. Anyhow, such had proved to be the law of English society; and the preference given to titled persons for posts in the administration manifested itself more especially under Whig Governments, so that Whig and oligarch became almost convertible terms; at any rate, both Tories and Radicals combined to foster that belief. In practice, however, the difference between Whigs and Tories merely amounted to this, that statesmen sprung from the middle class, like Canning, Huskisson, Peel, Gladstone, and Disraeli, found a more open field for their talents in a party which, as J. S. Mill observed, was by the law of its existence the stupidest—and he might have added the laziest—than among that which included the ablest, the most energetic, and the most ambitious of those born to hereditary wealth.

The first Reform agitation had been headed by Whig nobles; the Free Trade agitation had brought to the front gifted middle-class leaders who had learned to look on the territorial aristocracy, whether Whig or Tory, as monopolists who deliberately starved the people and obstructed the development of manufacturing industry for the express and avowed purpose of keeping wealth and power in their own exclusive possession. Regarding

them thus as natural enemies, their hostility did not cease with the abolition of the Corn Laws, but led to an exposure of the abuses which, as was alleged, were inseparable from a titled administration, and would be remedied by thorough-going democracy. What the new Radicals wanted was less to give the people power than to take power away from the oligarchy of inherited wealth, and to transfer it to an aristocracy of industrial ability, hating war as a source of expenditure and an interruption to trade, besides being directly productive of pain, disease, and death. And they thought that by giving votes to the working classes, together with the ballot and a sweeping redistribution of seats, this object would be secured.

Lord John Russell was the first statesman to take up Parliamentary Reform after the collapse of Chartism in 1848. In 1852, and again in 1854, he introduced Bills of which the second, at least, would have enfranchised a large section of the working-classes and considerably diminished the number of small boroughs. His object was probably rather to increase the Parliamentary strength of moderate Liberalism than to gain power for passing Radical measures. On neither occasion did he receive any support either within or without the House. But the value of Reform as a card in the game of party politics came before long to be recognised, and it was periodically played for many years between the Ins and the Outs, with hardly less unscrupulousness on the one side than on the other. Disraeli, now as before Chancellor of the Exchequer in Lord Derby's Conservative Government, now as before confronted by a hostile

majority in the House of Commons, was the first to use it for this purpose. It became known in the autumn of 1858 that the Conservative chiefs were preparing a measure on the subject to be laid before Parliament in the Session of 1859.

They had the disadvantage of finding the ground pre-occupied by the great classic orator of Radicalism with a Radical programme. Restored to Parliamentary life by the choice of a city since found unfaithful to the principles he held most dear, John Bright had spent the autumn recess in delivering a series of speeches at Birmingham, Manchester, and Glasgow on behalf of Parliamentary reform. Of these it will be enough to say that the reasons just given for the reconstitution of our representative system have been chiefly drawn from the materials they supply, and that the scheme they advocate differs from that since adopted with the consent of all parties only by being somewhat less democratic.

At the time Bright's oratorical campaign failed of its intended effect, and was acknowledged by his friends to be a failure. His opposition to the Russian and Chinese wars may have discredited his advocacy of any other cause; and the generally prosperous state of the working classes left them pretty well satisfied with things as they were. But his impressive caution against accepting any such illusory compromise as the Conservative scheme threatened to be sealed beforehand the fate of Disraeli's Reform Bill. No one who studies the provisions of that Bill can possibly accept as sincere the modern claim of the Conservatives to be a democratic party, although they may sometimes

use demagogic methods. Indeed, at that time their leaders made no such pretence. Lord Derby stated in 1852 that "one of the chief objects of his Government would be to stem the tide of democracy";[1] and a little earlier Disraeli pledged himself to oppose any measure having for its object to displace "the territorial influence and power" by which the country had been hitherto governed.[2] Accordingly, his own Bill was based on private information obtained from a number of territorial magnates giving satisfactory assurances that their power would not be endangered by its enfranchising clauses.[3] In fact, those clauses were so framed as to admit none but new middle-class voters, and to make the hold of the Tory country gentlemen on the counties stronger than ever.

Lord John Russell moved the rejection of this paltry measure, on the express ground that it left the borough franchise unaltered; in other words, because it kept up the exclusion of the working classes from power. His amendment was carried by a majority of 39, and the Conservative Government appealed to the country—that is, to the million electors of whom one-fifth returned more than half the House. They won twenty-four seats, and might have won enough to give them a working majority had not Italy intervened. For the elections really turned on the question whether, in the war that had just begun, England's moral support should be given to Austria, whose cause the Conservative statesmen thought a

[1] Bright, *Speeches*, p. 280 (People's edition).
[2] Molesworth, *History of England*, vol. ii., p. 407.
[3] Walpole, *History of Twenty-Five Years*, vol. i., p. 187.

good one, or to France and Piedmont, who were backed by Palmerston and Russell. When Parliament met it placed the Whig leaders in power by a majority of 13 only. To the general surprise, Gladstone, who had spoken and voted for the Conservative Reform Bill, took office in the new Ministry as Chancellor of the Exchequer—a step marking the definite junction of the Peelites with the Whigs. As love of Italy was the only point on which he agreed with Palmerston, the head of the new Administration, against the Conservative leaders, we shall probably not be mistaken in looking on this as the decisive element of the situation. We shall see in the next chapter how English political history, for the next six years, resolves itself entirely into a history of England's relations with the rest of the world.

Chapter XI.

LIGHT FROM THE WEST

Hardly had the new Liberal Cabinet been formed when it became of more vital moment than ever to Italian independence that it should have the support of the English Government and people. Two great French victories in the field had freed Lombardy from the Austrians, and with Austria's defeats the petty despotisms of Central Italy had fallen. Then suddenly the two Emperors, shocked by the carnage incident to their last battle, stopped the war. Napoleon III. failed to carry out his promise that Italy should be free from the Alps to the Adriatic. Austria ceded Lombardy, but retained Venice. The dispossessed Princes were to be restored, and Italian unity reduced to the mockery of a Confederation under the presidency of Pius IX. The details of this precious arrangement were to be settled by a European Congress. Then Italy's statesmen and people took the matter into their own hands, and, working all the time with consummate prudence, baffled the French Emperor's irresolute counsels by the logic of accomplished facts. Everywhere in Central Italy the proposal for union with Piedmont under King Victor Emanuel was accepted by enormous majorities. Napoleon III., who had forfeited all claim to Savoy by failing to carry out his original engagement,

now exacted its cession, and the cession of Nice also, as the price of tolerating this large addition to the territory of his ally.

The Italians had to yield, but they retorted by another bold stroke. Sicily, always writhing under the Bourbon yoke, took advantage of the general revolutionary movement to rise against it once more in the spring of 1860. With the connivance of the North Italian Government a thousand or more volunteers sailed to her assistance in May. At their head was Garibaldi, the popular hero of Italian liberty, famous for his defence of Rome against the French in 1849, and for his victories over Austrian troops in some of the minor engagements of 1859. Those former exploits were now eclipsed by the glory of his Sicilian campaign, in which he fought unaided and fought with brilliant success. What delays he experienced were caused by the unwillingness of Francesco Crispi, then and always his country's bane, to accept Victor Emanuel as King. Still, not much time was lost, for in August Garibaldi crossed over to the mainland, and on September 7th entered Naples, amid the frenzied enthusiasm of the populace. Meanwhile, a Piedmontese army sent by Cavour crossed the Papal frontier, defeated the Pope's mercenaries, liberated the Marches, and joined hands with Garibaldi's volunteers in October.

The rest belongs to Italian history. What interests us here is England's part in freeing Italy from foreign domination. This was considerable, perhaps decisive. In the European negotiations that followed the Peace of Villafranca, diplomacy had to deal more particularly with the question,

should the Central Italian States, including part of what had once been Pontifical territory, be permitted to annex themselves to Piedmont? Austria did not like such proceedings; French politicians rather dreaded, and French Catholics abhorred them; Queen Victoria and Prince Albert sympathised with the dispossessed dynasts. But Palmerston and Russell, with Gladstone's full support, steadily insisted on the right of the people to determine their own fate, and in the end they won the diplomatic game. Again, when it was proposed by the French Foreign Minister that the French and English fleets should prevent Garibaldi from crossing the Straits of Messina, Lord John Russell refused his consent, and our allies shrank from acting alone. Finally—although this is not yet a historical certainty—there is reason to believe that, not content with having exacted Savoy and Nice as the price of his acquiescence in the annexation of Central Italy, Napoleon III. was preparing to sell his agreement to the union of all Italy for further territorial concessions, the island of Sardinia, or Sardinia and Genoa, being mentioned as possible objects of plunder. On hearing this, Palmerston, whether he believed the rumour or not, distinctly gave it to be understood that England would oppose herself, if necessary by force of arms, to any such depredations.[1] Already, as regards Savoy, Lord John Russell had expressed himself in terms of no measured indignation, and his attitude had Palmerston's full approval. As our Ministers had certainly no intention of fighting France on

[1] Ashley, *Life of Palmerston* (1846–1865), vol ii., p. 182.

that subject, their remonstrance has been ridiculed as so much impotent bluster. But, as a warning to the French Emperor that any further schemes of plunder on his part would encounter more active resistance, the strong language used may not have been entirely thrown away.

Nor was this menace limited to words. In view of a possible French invasion the Volunteer Movement, begun during the Crimean War in Devonshire, received an immense impulse after the events of 1858 and 1859; while Palmerston made it a paramount object of his second Administration to see that the English arsenals should be placed in an adequate defensive condition, and that the fleet should be kept at full fighting strength.

Palmerston and Gladstone were both disciples of Canning; and it now seemed as if, under their auspices, Canning's principles were to be applied all over the world with brilliant success. Constitutional government on the English model had at length been given to Italy, and a beginning of the same system showed itself in Austria after the war of 1859, coupled with some recognition of Hungarian autonomy. At Cobden's persuasion, Napoleon III. accepted a commercial treaty with England, substituting a certain measure of free trade for the traditional French policy of protectionist exclusion. This, combined with the liberation of Italy and the partial surrender of Papal territory to the new Italian kingdom, took away so much of that Conservative and Catholic support which had hitherto been a mainstay of the Second Empire that the reactionary despot of 1852 had to seek for support

among freethinking Liberals, granting a little more freedom to the Press, and full publicity to the debates, in which a handful of Opposition speakers eloquently took part.

Beyond the Atlantic also, English ideas of liberty seemed to be gaining ground. After a long struggle, in which, thanks to the help of Northern Democrats, the Southern slaveholders had hitherto been invariably successful, the anti-slavery party at last succeeded in carrying the election of Abraham Lincoln, their candidate for the Presidency of the United States, in November, 1860. Although personally an Abolitionist, Lincoln did not stand as such, but as a Free-soiler—that is, as pledged to oppose the extension of slavery into the vast territory between the Mississippi and the Pacific, not yet organised into entirely self-governing States, but destined one day to become the most powerful section of the Union. Now slavery, shut up within its old limits, would be doomed by economic causes to ultimate extinction ; and, apart from that prospect, the Southern planters were persuaded that the Free States, when they commanded a sufficient majority, would have become so infected with Abolitionist principles as to demand a change in the Constitutional provision guaranteeing the perpetuity of their peculiar institution.

Without exactly understanding what was decided by Lincoln's election, the English middle classes joyfully welcomed it as a triumph for the anti-slavery cause that they had long held so dear ; and our democratic reformers in particular looked forward hopefully to the removal of a standing reproach to institutions they were accustomed to

the boasted English tradition of always siding with the weaker party—singularly illustrated in recent years by the attacks on our own pro-Boers—furnished an argument without appeal for siding with the South.

Plausible as such reasonings might seem, they betrayed a complete misconception of the real interests at stake. Neither England herself nor any other homogeneous European State would have tamely submitted to such a fate as that which America was invited to accept without a struggle. Italy, Hungary, and Poland offered no parallel to the case of the seceding States. They differed in language, race, and tradition from the Powers which held them in bondage by brutally offensive means. Nor did the conflict between England and her colonies furnish an appropriate parallel; for that arose from an endeavour on the side of the Mother-country to violate the liberties of self-governing dependencies, which, moreover, were not an integral part of her nationality. Many people were so impressed by eager Northern disclaimers of any wish to interfere with slavery that they quite overlooked the legitimate claim of the Federal Government to preserve its authority intact. And they equally overlooked the decisive circumstance that the Confederates were fighting to preserve slavery for ever and ever—which should alone have sufficed to alienate the sympathies of an Abolitionist nation, as indeed it did draw the sympathies of Continental Liberalism to the North.

So well did the pro-Southerners appreciate the strength of English prejudice against slavery that they had to put forward a tariff question as the

pretended cause of separation. Then, as now, American interests were divided, the Southern planters being Free Traders and the Northern manufacturers Protectionists. These latter took advantage of the secession to pass a Protectionist measure, the Morrill Tariff, in all haste through Congress. But to represent their conduct as a justification for the South was a singular inversion of cause and effect, only to be accounted for by a very powerful exercise of the will to believe.

As to the expediency of fighting for the Union and the possibility of maintaining it by force, time has proved that Lincoln was a better prophet than the bulk of the educated classes in England. It has to be mentioned, however, that one Englishman did distinctly foretell the ultimate victory of the North. This was not a practical statesman or a soldier, but the idealist philosopher John Stuart Mill.[1] Whether the victory was or was not bought too dear may, of course, be disputed. But if, as seems likely, those four years of fighting have effectually prevented any future wars on the North American Continent, even such a frightful sacrifice of blood and treasure has not been made in vain.

A crushing defeat suffered by the chief Northern army at the beginning of the war inspired our respectable classes with a belief in the invincibility of the South which never wavered until its final collapse. Hatred for American democracy naturally sent the whole Tory party and Tory Press to the

[1] See his *Conflict in America,* first published in *Fraser's Magazine,* February, 1862 (reprinted in *Dissertations and Discussions,* vol. iii.).

side of the slaveholders.[1] And for the reasons above stated the greater number of London Liberal newspapers went with them. Among these were *The Times, The Morning Post, The Daily Telegraph, The Saturday Review, The Examiner,* and *Punch.* The North found its principal advocate in *The Daily News,* to which Harriet Martineau contributed three leading articles of supreme ability every week. It was also supported by *The Morning Star* and *The Spectator,* at that time a less widely circulated journal than it has since become.

The leading Liberal statesmen then in power—especially those who favoured Italy—favoured the South. The Foreign Secretary, now raised to the peerage as Earl Russell, described the war as waged for empire on the one side, and for independence on the other. The learned and philosophic Cornewall Lewis wrote to a friend that the South fought for independence, the North "to gratify passion and pride."[2] Gladstone, speaking at a time when nationalities were thought sacred, declared that Jefferson Davis, the Confederate President, had "made a nation of the South." Lord Palmerston, from his high position, felt bound to greater reserve; but, speaking in the House of Commons, he did not hesitate to stigmatise as "infamous" a disciplinary order issued by General Butler as Federal Governor of New Orleans.

On this question, as on the Italian question,

[1] In Parliament and on the platform Disraeli kept his pro-Southern sympathies under a veil, but they are disclosed in *Lothair.*

[2] Lewis, *The Administrations of Great Britain,* Preface, p. xx.

Queen Victoria held views directly opposed to those of her Ministers. In both instances she was probably under the influence of her husband, who, like most enlightened Germans, sided against the slaveholders. As it happened, the opinions of the royal pair, while they had no influence on the fate of Italy, told decisively on the fate of America. At the end of 1861 two Southern emissaries, named Slidell and Mason, while on their way to plead the cause of the Confederacy in Europe, were seized on board an English mail steamer, the *Trent,* by Captain Wilkes, the commanding officer of an American warship, and carried captive to Washington. When the news of this lawless action—for such it was—reached England the Government, after due consultation with the law officers of the Crown, resolved to demand the surrender of Slidell and Mason from the American authorities. A despatch in that sense was accordingly drafted and laid before the Queen for her approval. Prince Albert, at that time already smitten by a mortal disease, still retained strength and discretion enough to study the draft, and to suggest such alterations in the wording as to convert Palmerston's imperious summons into a reasonable demand that the United States Government could agree to, as in fact they did, without any loss of self-respect.

Thus the two countries were saved from the calamity of war. But in another way the governing classes of England were enabled to give considerable though indirect help to the Slave Power. Prevented by a close blockade from sending out native privateers to prey on the merchant shipping

of the North, the Confederate chiefs supplied themselves with armed cruisers for that purpose from the dockyards of Birkenhead. While one of these, the *Alabama,* was building, the American Minister in London drew Lord Russell's attention to her obvious destination, and asked to have her stopped. Trusting to the report of a subordinate, the Foreign Secretary refused to interfere. A subsequent and more urgent remonstrance was referred to the Queen's Advocate. An attack of illness prevented him from giving immediate attention to the case. Pending his decision, an embargo ought, of course, to have been laid on the suspected ship; but this obvious precaution was delayed, as if intentionally, until it came too late. When orders for her detention ultimately arrived at Liverpool, the *Alabama* had already escaped, and was on her way to begin a career of successful depredation which continued for nearly two years. Lord Russell, to do him justice, proposed in the Cabinet that the British-built privateer, which had never even entered a Confederate harbour, should be arrested in any British or Colonial port where she put in; but even so very moderate a measure of reparation was refused by his colleagues. To some it may seem that the employment of England's whole naval strength for her capture on the high seas would not have been excessive severity. In 1871 an international Court of Arbitration condemned our country to pay over three millions sterling as compensation for the damage done by the *Alabama* and her consorts to American shipowners. What ought by rights to have been exacted from Messrs. Laird of Birkenhead, who

built this mischief-making cruiser with the full knowledge of her destination, and from their abettors in the Cabinet, was taken out of the pockets of the people.

A more subtle effect of the American war on English public opinion has now to be considered. Our Radicals had long looked across the Atlantic for their example, if not for their ideal. But with the temporary break-up of the Union a terrible discredit fell on democracy, which now seemed incompatible with the existence of a great Power. That the Americans were struggling desperately to preserve their national existence gave occasion to fresh reproach, as the war temporarily put an end to personal liberty in both the contending Republics. And some people confidently predicted that the most successful general would possess himself of despotic power on the conclusion of the war. Meanwhile the most was made of the military and financial errors necessarily incidental to so great a conflict waged by an inexperienced administration. Southern successes, due to a defensive position and to the presence of more professional officers than the Northern armies could obtain, were credited to the aristocratic character of the slave power. It seemed to be forgotten for what military disasters our own aristocratic institutions had been responsible. In striking contrast to George III., Lincoln always put the ablest generals he could find in high command, so that in two years the ablest of all came to the top.

All this time the splendour and prosperity of the Second Empire was exercising a fascination on

English upper-class opinion which told also in an anti-democratic sense. More especially Napoleon III.'s Free Trade policy, although inspired by an English Liberal, tended to prejudice men's minds against free representative government; for the commercial treaty with England was unquestionably imposed on France by a despot's will.

With public opinion given over to reactionary political influences, it was inevitable that Parliamentary reform should be shelved. The Liberal Government had redeemed the promise on whose strength they regained office in 1859, by introducing, in 1860, a Bill that would have increased the electorate by thirty-five per cent. But, being received with indifference both by the House and the people, it died of sheer neglect. There could not have been a better proof that the last general election had been won, not on the question of reform, but on the question of Italian independence. And, although the American Civil War had nothing to do with this failure, not having then begun, it effectually prevented the question from being revived for some years to come.

The short-lived Parliament of 1857 was in other ways more Liberal than its successor. A Bill for the Abolition of Church Rates, which passed the Commons by a majority of sixty-three in 1858, was defeated over and over again in the 'sixties. In 1858, also, the Commons forced the Lords to admit Jews to Parliament. In 1860 they only passed the repeal of the paper duty, a tax on knowledge, by a majority of nine, and then submitted to its reimposition by the Lords. Next year it only passed by

eighteen votes, the resistance of the Upper House being this time with extreme difficulty overcome. The session of 1858 saw also the abolition of the property qualification for members of Parliament—one of the points of the Charter. But the greatest triumph of reason over tradition was won the year before, when the divorce law, as it now exists, first came into being. Before that date marriage with an unfaithful partner could be dissolved only by a special Act of Parliament, obtainable only after two distinct suits, in two separate law courts, had been won. Practically, of course, this meant the denial of redress to all but the very rich; while among the rich, with very few exceptions, it was granted only to men. What share superstition had in the resistance offered to the Divorce Bill is shown by the fact that Gladstone fought it clause by clause in the Commons Committee, and that fourteen Bishops against two wished to prohibit the re-marriage of divorced persons. Palmerston's stubborn resolution alone saved the Bill, which, as it was, escaped wreckage in the Lords only by two votes. But for his firmness it might have been delayed till thirty years later.

A reactionary Ministry and Parliament might well have plunged the country into war with America by breaking the blockade of the Southern ports, had they not been held back by the silent determination of those most interested in the matter —the English people. Of these, according to no friendly witness, Earl Russell, the majority—that is to say, the working classes—sympathised with the North. Their choice did them the more honour

because vast numbers of operatives engaged in the cotton manufacture had been deprived of their subsistence by the stoppage of the raw material, for which at that time we were almost entirely dependent on the plantations of the Southern slaveholders, who, indeed, would probably not have kindled a civil war but for their confident reliance on the necessities of the English market. Now, the patience and dignity with which the operatives—and not these alone, but also the small traders who lived on their custom—bore the sufferings of what was called the Cotton Famine gave the upper classes quite a new idea of their worth; while again the liberality of all who were not themselves in want to the sufferers gave these a friendlier feeling towards those above them in the social scale.[1]

Besides this very obvious reaction, the American War exercised another and profounder effect on the future of English Liberalism. It dissociated the democratic cause from the idea of peace at any price, from the taint of a supposed devotion to material interests, from the suspected bias of anti-patriotism. If reform excited no enthusiasm, this indifference, as has been already observed, owed something to the fact that its most eloquent advocate, John Bright, had made himself unpopular by opposing the Russian War. But now Bright came forward as also the most eloquent advocate of the North; and, although he never fairly faced the

[1] I am sorry to have to mention, as a dark shade in this otherwise pleasing picture, the infamous calumny, long circulated among the respectables, that John Bright contributed nothing to the relief of the operatives. The real fact, if I remember rightly, is that he sacrificed the savings of a lifetime in helping them through the crisis.

implications of his championship, it constituted a virtual admission that there were circumstances in which a sanguinary war might with justice be waged—not only, as by Poles, Hungarians, and Italians, for national independence, but also, as Lincoln said over the dead of Gettysburg, that government of the people, by the people, for the people should not perish from the earth.

While the friends of peace were pointing England to the paths of honour and safety, the friends of intervention were dragging her through excruciating alternatives between disaster and shame. First came the ineffective Ministerial attacks, already mentioned, on the French Emperor for his annexation of Savoy and Nice. Then the Polish insurrection of 1863 gave a fresh opportunity, which was not neglected, for addressing Platonic remonstrances to Russia. On this occasion Lord Russell got France and Austria to join in the ridiculous performance, which only drew down on them the cool and cutting insolence of Prince Gortchakoff, the Russian Chancellor. Our Foreign Secretary never intended to fight for Poland; but the next European complication that arose involved a serious risk of war. This was the Schleswig-Holstein question. We need not enter into the legal intricacies of that fateful affair. It will suffice to mention that the interests of a considerable German population were at stake, whose wishes for a long time won no more attention than if they had been a flock of sheep. All were forcibly attached to the Crown of Denmark, which passed into a new family towards the end of 1863;

while some were forcibly incorporated with the Danish kingdom, and subjected to the oppression of Danish administrators, who tried to deprive them of their German nationality. When the change of dynasty took place, the smaller German members of the Diet sent troops into Holstein, which was a member of the Germanic Confederation, but refrained from entering Schleswig. Count Bismarck, the Prussian Prime Minister, saw and used the opportunity to intervene. Taking the work out of the feeble hands of the Diet, he persuaded Austria to join Prussia in occupying both the Duchies with their combined armies.

Bismarck was, at that time, not popular either in Germany or in England. Animated, like Cavour, by the highest patriotic purposes, and, like Cavour, absolutely unscrupulous in the means he adopted for carrying them out, this man had resolved to attempt again what the Parliament of Professors had failed to achieve in 1848—the union of all Germany, under the supremacy of Prussia. Seeing that the expulsion of Austria from the Germanic Confederation was a necessary preliminary to this work; seeing, further, that, in his own vigorous language, her expulsion had to be effected, not by speeches and resolutions, but by blood and iron, he began by re-fashioning the Prussian army into an irresistible weapon of war. His object could not be publicly explained; and the Prussian Representative Chamber, fearing that the new model might be used to destroy the small amount of public liberty then existing, refused to grant the necessary supplies. Bismarck, with his master's support, raised taxes on the sole authority of the Upper

House. A grave constitutional crisis seemed imminent, and ominous references to Charles I. and Strafford ran round the German Press; but the taxes were obediently paid, and the policy of the great Minister triumphed.

It triumphed no less signally abroad than at home. The policy of the German Powers excited the indignation of the English people, who, as usual, supposed that, because they were strong, they must also be wrong. It so happened that an interesting domestic occurrence enlisted their sympathies still more deeply on the Danish side. Early in 1863 the Prince of Wales had married the beautiful daughter of the Prince to whom diplomacy had assigned the fateful heritage of Denmark and the Duchies. The charms of this young lady won all hearts, and many Don Quixotes longed to send over champions to fight for her injured sire. Palmerston vainly tried to form a triple alliance with France and Russia, vainly blustered about what England's unaided strength could do. With the Queen and the majority of the Cabinet against him, he could only convene a Conference in London, which failed to reconcile the belligerents. Denmark fought on, but had to lay down her arms in a few weeks, lured to her ruin, men thought, by a blind reliance on England's help.

Canning's policy, in the hands of his most brilliant successor, after freeing Italy, had suffered three signal defeats. It was now utterly bankrupt, and could no more stave off the new Reform Bill than it had staved off the old.

The first to recognise the change in public

opinion wrought by the influence of the American War, combined with the collapse of our foreign policy, was Gladstone. Before the close of the Danish question his adhesion to the democratic cause was announced in a powerful speech on a private Bill for lowering the franchise, which at once marked him out as its coming leader. But in the cause of religious Liberalism he still lagged behind, giving only an equivocal support to Irish Church disestablishment, and frankly opposing the abolition of university tests. Yet the currents of public opinion were flowing with a greater impetus in that direction, and were destined to effect as rapid a revolution. We have now to trace the history of the great intellectual movement to which they gave expression, and which constitutes so vital an element in the English history of the later nineteenth century.

Chapter XII.

COSMIC ECONOMY

In a former chapter we traced the development of English philosophy, science, literature, and religious thought, down to a point approximately dated by the outbreak of the Russian War. We have now to deal with a period of about equal length, roughly coinciding with the political supremacy of Lord Palmerston. There is no sharp line of demarcation between the two, and to a certain extent they even overlap. But, on the whole, we shall not be mistaken in saying that, while the first is a period of quiet seed-time in which ideas are prepared, outlined, and either tentatively put forward or stored up for future use, in the second they are ripened, elaborated, applied, and, so to speak, violently exploded on the world, with the result of obtaining, if not its assent, at least its full attention and respect.

The Palmerstonian period is also one of hero-worship, of splendid publicity and homage given not only to ideas, but even more to their representatives; a time when work done with little honour in the previous years comes in for universal recognition and applause, with this effect also that new reputations are made at a single stroke, being rapidly imposed by the best judges on the multitude of listeners. I have said that the Conservative

reaction under Peel, by diverting the English intellect from practice to theory and imagination, contributed to, if it did not create, the great ideal achievements of the early Victorian age. Now in the Palmerstonian period a fresh source of energy comes into play—the ready reception given to new genius, the hope of winning immediate applause, the certainty almost of winning it when genius is displayed. It seems as if the French alliance and the fashionableness of French things gives a certain French tone to our ways of thinking; while mere brilliancy being much less common here than in France, the true superiorities are not yet discouraged and crowded out by the mediocrities of distinction.

Thus it happens that the value and literary power of Carlyle, Grote, and Macaulay among historians, of Dickens, Thackeray, and Charlotte Brontë among novelists, of Tennyson and the Brownings among poets, of Ruskin as an æsthetician, of Maurice as a theologian, of Mill as a philosopher and publicist, although founded on previous performances whose eminence contemporary critics had not failed to recognise, seem first to have found universal admission between the early 'fifties and 'sixties; while, again, Anthony Trollope, Charles Reade, and George Eliot in fiction, Froude in history, Jowett in theology, Bain and Herbert Spencer in philosophy, Buckle and Maine in sociology, Darwin in science, Matthew Arnold in criticism, and Swinburne in poetry, reach their full reputation immediately after the publication of their first very important works, which fall within the specified period.

On looking back across this distance of time to all those high and diversified activities, one is most impressed by the complete emergence and incipient triumph of a single idea—the idea of evolution. But that idea would have been self-contradictory had it come as a sudden revelation, or had it effected an instantaneous transformation of thought. We have seen, in fact, how Robert Chambers applied the doctrine of development as a universal law of change in the *Vestiges,* thus preparing the way for Spencer and Darwin. Hardly any advance has since been made on his general arguments, which at the time when they appeared would have been accepted as convincing but for theological truculence and scientific timidity. And Chambers himself only gave unity to thoughts already in wide circulation. Progress and development were great words in English, French, and German philosophy at the time of the French Revolution. But they had a very uphill battle to fight along the whole line. The theory of catastrophes in geology, the theory of immutable species in biology, the mediæval enthusiasm of the Romanticists, the dogma of human corruption in theology —these were among the obstacles to be overcome.

What ultimately secured the victory for evolution was the cumulative argument, the convergence of effects, the concentration of forces on a single point of attack, the interpenetration of ideas constantly thought of together. Neither Comte nor Mill was an evolutionist; but the *Positive Philosophy* and the *System of Logic* tended to make their readers evolutionists by bringing nature and man under the same categories. Human history

subjected to order gave progress in return as a constitutive principle to biology. And a really universal law of causation must include the formation by some physical process of new organic species from pre-existing forms of matter. Now, to repeat what has been said before, it seemed infinitely more probable that those pre-existing forms were slightly different organisms than that they were unorganised matter.

Such was the line taken by a very vigorous and independent thinker, who happened to be also a clergyman, Baden Powell (father of the celebrated General), at that time Professor of Astronomy at Oxford. He had been a strenuous opponent of the Tractarian Movement, and he now resisted with equal energy the narrow Biblical Evangelicalism which had profited by its collapse to impose a degrading Sabbatarian tyranny on the necks of Englishmen. By way of giving a religious colouring to the higher education, University teaching had been kept in the hands of the clergy, with the result that at Oxford the ablest clerics had mostly become freethinkers, and of these Baden Powell was one. Perhaps from being behind the scenes he had learned to look on ecclesiastical terrors with more contempt than his lay brethren. At any rate, no other official representative of science adhered to the general doctrine of the *Vestiges* with the fearless publicity of this Professor.

Granting that, with the exclusion of supernatural interference from the order of nature, evolution became a logical necessity of thought, the question arose by what physical agency the production of

organic species had been accomplished. Geologists had no difficulty in explaining how the present conformation of the earth's crust had come about, for the forces determining its shape and composition might be seen perpetually at work. Astronomers had never witnessed the birth of a stellar system; but physical analogies enabled them to interpret it as a process of condensation on the largest scale. Millenniums of recorded experience taught historians how social structures are built up. But no human eye had ever seen a new species come into existence, nor could naturalists name any force capable of creating so much as a new beetle. Palæontology proved that the marvel had somehow or other come about over and over again in geologic time; how it came about remained a mystery. Robert Chambers sought the key in embryology, which is indeed an abridged record of evolution, suggesting the successive transformations of one living type into another; but it merely gives evidence of the changes, leaving their causes unexplained.

Help came from the social sciences, and especially from the most complete among them, which was Political Economy. Since Adam Smith, the increasing division of labour had been a recognised note of industrial progress; and Aristotle, the greatest naturalist of antiquity, had long ago pointed out that in the higher animal organisms the physiological division of labour is more perfect than in the lower. But neither Aristotle nor Milne-Edwards, who revived his doctrine in the last century, connected it with evolution, which, indeed, neither of them accepted. This step seems

to have been first taken by Herbert Spencer in an essay on "Progress," published by the *Westminster Review* in 1857.

The industrial division of labour is an arrangement designedly entered into by the members of a human society for their common advantage. We cannot suppose that the components of an animal or vegetal organism are capable of such conscious adjustments to each other's convenience; and so some other cause must be sought to account for the physiological division of labour.

Such a cause is suggested by the economical idea of competition. Malthus has explained how this force is brought to bear on society by the law of population. The number of individuals to be fed tends to grow faster than the means of feeding them. Hence arises a struggle for existence, in which the stronger or better equipped survive, and the weaker or worse equipped perish. Therefore, an organism which in some way or other has become more differentiated than its competitors will beat them out of the field, just as a society will when it possesses a similar advantage. And the same holds true of every imaginable superiority by which one individual or species is distinguished from the rest. Speaking generally, what is best adapted to the conditions of life has the best chance of living and of propagating its kind.

England was the European country where the growth of population and the resulting competition for the means of subsistence most obtruded themselves on public notice, and first became subjects of systematic study. And so for thirty years Englishmen alone had the happy idea of extending

the competitive principle to biology, and using it as a method for explaining the origin of varieties and species. In 1813 Wells, to whom we owe the true theory of dew, accounted for the different colours of the different races of mankind by natural selection; in 1831 Matthew, a botanist, applied it to organic evolution in general; in 1852 Herbert Spencer used what he called "the survival of the fittest" to explain the development of brain-power in man; while at the same time Charles Darwin and Mr. A. R. Wallace, quite unknown to him and to each other, were working out the law of natural selection over the whole field of animal and vegetal life. Their views were first made public in 1858, and Darwin brought out his *Origin of Species* in the following year. Only the adverse influence of religious opinion can account for such a long delay; and, in fact, one of England's foremost naturalists, Richard Owen, in a private conversation with a clergyman soon after the publication of Darwin's book, blamed the great discoverer for offending vulgar prejudice, and himself tried to crush the new theory, with which he agreed all the time, by a coldly supercilious criticism, which he never thought fit to acknowledge, in the *Edinburgh Review*.

Evolution gave offence to theological prejudice in three distinct ways. It contradicted the obvious meaning of what most people had been taught to accept as an inspired and infallible account of the origin of things in the Bible. It destroyed Paley's argument for the existence of God—that is, the attempt to show that the structure of the animal body can only be accounted for on the hypothesis

that it is the work of an intelligent creator. And by deriving the human race from an animal ancestor it suggested that the human soul is reserved for no higher destinies than the soul of a brute. This last departure from current orthodoxy was the most easily intelligible and the most likely to excite popular feeling against the new views. Even Lyell, who accepted Darwinism as a whole, could not reconcile himself to man's derivation from an ape-like ancestor; while Carlyle, who, disbelieving as he did in miracles, would have been puzzled to find any other genealogy, rejected it with utter abhorrence. *The Daily Telegraph*, at that time a Liberal newspaper, tried to excite a prejudice against Fawcett, the future Liberal Minister, among the electors of Southwark, on the ground that he had written a favourable notice of Darwin in *Macmillan's Magazine*.

A few months before the Southwark election Darwinism had come up for discussion at the annual meeting of the British Association. Samuel Wilberforce, Bishop of Oxford, who had some pretensions to figure as a man of science, took part in the debate, and so far forgot his good manners as to ask Professor Huxley, who represented the evolutionist side, whether he was descended from an ape through his grandfather or his grandmother. Huxley, who excelled the Bishop as much in sarcasm as in science, answered that he would prefer such an ancestor to a rhetorician who sought to cover his ignorance of the question by irrelevant appeals to religious prejudice.

It has become the fashion among more recent

theologians to contend that, assuming what they admit to be highly probable, the derivation of man's body from an ape-like ancestor, his mind owes its origin to some higher process of creation—which, indeed, is only another way of saying that mind does not depend on brain. But this line of retreat from an untenable position had been cut off before Darwin's discoveries were made known. Herbert Spencer, already named as one of the early evolutionists, published in 1855 the first draft of his *Principles of Psychology*. Here, at the very outset, he shows by a masterly analysis of the reasoning process that the most abstract mathematical inferences involve no more than a continuous application of the power to identify, combined with the power to discriminate. Now these two powers are exhibited by the humblest creature possessing any trace of consciousness whatever; and these, combined with the power of retention, or memory, which also can be denied to no animal, suffice to account for the highest intellectual acquisitions that have ever been stored in a human mind. And all such exercises of conscious intelligence, however they may vary in quantity, agree in the one essential quality, which alone gives them any value as vital functions—the quality of bringing the organism into harmony with its environment. In other words, the evolution of life is one vast process of natural education, preparing its pupils to hold their own in the battle of life—a principle, of course, not less, but more, applicable to the development of the emotions and the will than to the development of the intellect.

By a remarkable coincidence, just as Darwin and Wallace had rediscovered Natural Selection and

used it to explain the origin of species, independently of one another, so also another psychologist, Alexander Bain, gave substantially the same explanation of reason as Spencer's, in his work on *The Senses and the Intellect,* published at the same time, and, apparently, without any previous communication between the two philosophers. Bain says nothing about evolution, but his analysis was perhaps all the more effective in suggesting a fundamental unity of composition between human and animal intelligence. His work also had at first a much wider circulation than Spencer's *Psychology.*

Spencer belonged to a family of schoolmasters; there was a good deal of the pedagogue in his composition, and a volume on education figures among his miscellaneous works. It therefore lay very near that one with his generalising habits should conceive all experience and all nature as a process of rigorous schooling, conducted on a self-acting system of rewards and punishments, promotions and expulsions, with continual reference to a period of future emancipation, and having for its ideal the ultimate identification of work with play in some far-off society of the future, revived from the dreams of Priestley, Godwin, and Shelley. Thus, in Spencer's case at least, evolution, so far from being a method borrowed by the study of man from the study of nature, seems to be the very reverse—a light thrown back from human experience on unconscious physical processes.

Nor was it educational ideas alone that Spencer used to elucidate the mystery of organic origins. We have seen how both he and others extended

the laws of political economy to all vital phenomena, finding the struggle for existence and the increasing division of labour exemplified in fields unknown to Malthus and Adam Smith. Spencer had been brought up by an uncle zealous for the new Poor Law and the Anti-Corn-Law League, a sworn foe to Protection. By his Nonconformist connections also he had learned to look with profound distrust on State interference with religion and education. Thus, from the conviction that men, for their own good, had better be left to their own natural instincts arose the far wider conviction that, in building up the great edifice of nature, things had been let alone—had been made what they are by the spontaneous play of physical forces without the aid of a superintending Providence, or even the initial impulse of a Creator.

By a curious fatality, the individualistic ideas, so prevalent in his youth, out of which Spencer evolved evolution itself were at first far more intelligible and popular than the vast cosmic philosophy they inspired him to conceive. Then, as time went on and the new theory of a self-made world won ever wider assent, the enthusiasm for self-made men, for self-help, for Individualism, grew less, to the extreme scandal of the aging philosopher, who had become, if possible, a still more confident believer in *laissez-faire,* above all in the matter of national education, on finding it confirmed, as he thought, by the laws of Nature herself. In fact, with far less ingenuity than Spencer's, it is perfectly possible to extract from the laws of nature any system of morality and social organisation that we choose to put into them. When they have constructed their

human system on what seem to be the most rational motives—whether these lead to Individualism or Socialism, or something between the two—philosophers will always be able to satisfy themselves that it is the inevitable outcome of a cosmic evolution.

A thinker of less combining and deducing power than Herbert Spencer, but with more knowledge and greater literary brilliancy, acquired a world-wide reputation by applying much the same economical philosophy to the interpretation of history. This was Henry Thomas Buckle, the first volume of whose famous *History of Civilisation in England* appeared in 1857. Brought up in the same Free Trade and Individualist principles, he showed the same eagerness to read social phenomena by their light. According to Buckle, the Protectionist spirit in Church and State is, and always has been, the great obstacle to advancing civilisation. Where population multiplies very rapidly civilisation does not advance at all, for there the supply of labour always outruns the demand, and so the great majority of the people fall into helpless dependence on the landlords and capitalists. Only in Europe and its Colonies has there been some approach to an emancipation of the masses, and therefore some effective resistance to oppression. Still, even in Europe priests and kings have done untold mischief by undertaking more or less to manage everybody's affairs, and to choose everybody's beliefs for him. Left to themselves, men naturally seek to accumulate knowledge and to accumulate wealth. What they do

ultimately depends on what they know; and, just as political economy studies the laws governing the accumulation and distribution of wealth, so the scientific historian of civilisation has to study in what ways knowledge is acquired and diffused.

We cannot tell how Buckle would have worked out this part of his great scheme, for he did not live to finish even the General Introduction to his *History*. But the book, so far as it goes, contributed very powerfully to the emancipation of English thought from theological prejudices. Here he falls in with the whole trend of modern English historiography. Without concert and without any hint at a common purpose, Dr. Arnold, Carlyle, Grote, Macaulay, Milman, and Froude had all been waging war against the fashionable Romanticism, the Oxford Movement, and Young England. But so far a smug Protestantism had been permitted to reap the fruit of their labours. Now, Buckle made no secret of his opinion that, so far as bigotry and superstition went, there was little to choose between the Catholic and Protestant Churches. It is already prominent in his first volume; while the second, published four years later (1861), illustrates it from beginning to end, Spain and Scotland being made to furnish examples of the ills wrought by priestly domination under widely contrasted forms of theological belief.

Buckle had a profound faith, resting, apparently, on no very logical grounds, in God and a future life; and in his first volume he showed a dislike, amounting to intolerance, of their open denial. Mill, who personally rejected all theology, although

he considered that a fairly good case might be made out for what is called "natural religion," strongly objected to having an embargo laid on its public discussion. To secure this right, it was not enough, in his opinion, that all the legal restrictions on its exercise should be repealed. Alexis de Tocqueville had put into currency a telling phrase, "The tyranny of the majority"; and Mill well knew that such tyranny could make itself felt without any appeal to mob violence. His most popular work, the essay *On Liberty,* published in 1859, has for its object to define the limits beyond which social restraint on the sayings and doings of the individual should not be pushed. According to him, liberty of discussion should be absolute; while liberty of action should be allowed where the actions are purely self-regarding—that is, where the interests of the agent, or of the agents in cases where different persons agree in a common line of conduct, are alone concerned.

Evidently we have here also, as in the case of Buckle and the evolutionists, a generalisation of the economic principles associated with Bentham's school. Bentham himself had no love for liberty or individuality as such, and would not have objected to making people happy without asking their leave, if the thing could be done. Nor does Mill, at least avowedly, claim individual liberty as an indefeasible right. He argues for it as a means, and the best means, for securing the happiness of the community. Nevertheless, it looks as if he had inherited a certain metaphysical bias in favour of liberty as such, which made him more sensible to the utilitarian arguments on its side than to

those that might have been urged on the opposite side.

A hard-and-fast line between society and the units of which it is composed cannot, in fact, be drawn; and, therefore, no general law of liberty can be laid down. With such an imitative animal as man, an action, to be strictly self-regarding, must also be strictly private, and so by its very nature withdrawn from the cognisance of others. Various vices of a purely self-regarding character may, of course, be very effectually prevented by not allowing the means for indulging in them to be sold. But, on self-defensive principles, society is surely justified in shielding its members against temptation; and Mill himself seems to admit this in discussing the ethics of public-house legislation, and the expediency of prohibiting the pandar's trade.

In his argument against religious intolerance Mill occupies much firmer ground, though not all of it is of equal value; and the question of whether or not it is desirable to sanction the education of children in beliefs generally rejected by the educated classes remains untouched. Like most Benthamites, he was against having religion of any kind taught at the public expense.

Mill's claim of the right to question every dogma of religion, even the most fundamental, made at least one illustrious convert in the person of Buckle, who wrote an enthusiastic review of the essay *On Liberty,* and, contrary to the strong language used in his own first volume, expressed his readiness to consider patiently anything that could be said against his own belief in a future life. He also

took the opportunity of denouncing Sir John Coleridge for an oppressive sentence passed on a poor man, found afterwards to be insane, for scribbling some blasphemous expressions on a gate. Holyoake, who supplied Buckle with the information on which he wrote, afterwards admitted that his version of the case was not absolutely correct. At the same time, it remains true that there was a gross miscarriage of justice, directly due to religious prejudice, and that Buckle performed a great public service by exposing it. His conduct, according to Holyoake, "is the only example of a gentleman coming forward in that personal way to vindicate the right of free thought in the friendless and obscure."[1]

Meanwhile a devoted band of scholars were struggling to secure the right to free thought where hitherto it had been held not to exist—that is, among the clergy of the Established Church. We have already seen how, towards the middle of the century, a freethinking movement, which had been gaining ground during the whole previous decade, suddenly burst into public notice. All through the 'fifties a number of writers, representing every shade of advanced opinion, from liberal Christianity to something not very distinguishable from atheism, kept up a fire of criticism on the current religious beliefs. Among others, James Martineau, the foremost Unitarian divine of the century, made himself conspicuous by articles, contributed to the *Westminster* and *National Reviews,* exposing the weakness of clerical apologies

[1] G. J. Holyoake, *Sixty Years of an Agitator's Life,* vol. ii., p. 96.

for the old dogmas, and introducing the revolutionary Biblical criticism of Germany to English readers. But the most telling assaults were delivered within the pale of the Establishment itself. A band of clergymen, collectively known as the Broad Church, although some of them earnestly repudiated the name, kept the attention of religious circles on the stretch by the audacity of their speculations, sometimes uttered even in the pulpit. F. W. Robertson, the most powerful of English preachers after Dr. Newman, and F. D. Maurice, the most profound of Anglican theologians, made themselves the organs of a semi-mystical religion, whose positive significance remained much less intelligible than its sharp antagonism to the dogmas of Original Sin and the Atonement, as held by Catholic and Calvinist alike. Maurice, in particular, gave a new interpretation to the Christian doctrine of damnation, which seemed to hold out some hope of final redemption to the lost; but he had to pay for being so far in advance of his age by the surrender of his professorship at King's College, London. However, Maurice's friend and disciple Kingsley continued to preach his gospel, unmolested, to rural congregations in Somerset.

Soon the neology of the cloister, as it was called, far outran the neology of the pulpit. It flourished at Oxford, and most of all in the most intellectual of Oxford Colleges, Balliol, whose then Tutor and future Master, Benjamin Jowett, already passed for being an "infidel" in 1851. In 1855 he edited some of St. Paul's Epistles, with accompanying essays in which his gift for subtle and daring speculation found the freest exercise. Not only

were the current doctrines of the Fall and the Atonement unsparingly dissected, but the hollowness of the stock arguments for Theism was exposed by a few dexterous punctures. His orthodox opponents revenged themselves by compelling him to sign the Thirty-nine Articles on being appointed Greek Professor, and, less excusably, by defeating for several years a proposal for the better endowment of his chair. In this and other ways it was attempted to crush out liberal theology in the Universities.

As a protest against this repressive system, seven liberal theologians issued a collective manifesto of their opinions in the shape of a volume entitled *Essays and Reviews*. All but two of the contributors were Oxford men, and all but one, Charles Goodwin, were clerics. Professor Baden Powell, already mentioned as one of the earliest champions of evolution, sent the most advanced of all the essays. He had recently published a volume on *The Order of Nature*, almost openly denying the possibility of miracles; and of that volume his paper is a simple summary, with the addition of a triumphant reference to Darwin's *Origin of Species*, which had appeared in the interim. Next to this in importance ranks a review of Bunsen's Biblical Researches by Professor Rowland Williams, a Cambridge Hebraist with the Cambridge directness of speech. Without endorsing in all particulars the views of his German guide, Williams intimates pretty plainly that the Bible contains no supernatural predictions, that much of its history is inauthentic, and not all of its morality immaculate. Bunsen's pantheistic

interpretation of the most essential Christian dogmas is also quoted with manifest complacency. H. B. Wilson, who had acted as the informal editor of the volume, practically denies the claim of Christianity to be taken in any exclusive sense as a divine revelation; while Temple, the future Primate, points out that the doctrine of immortality seems to have been discovered without any supernatural aid by the Persians, and borrowed from them by the Jews. The volume closes with a long essay by Professor Jowett, *On the Interpretation of Scripture,* the drift of which is that, if the Bible were read like any other book, much of its supposed dogmatic teaching would melt into air.

A policy of discreet silence in official circles nearly caused *Essays and Reviews* to fail of its intended effect, which was to excite discussion and controversy. Not until ten months after its publication was attention drawn to what had been done. An article in the *Westminster Review* for October, 1860, written by Mr. Frederic Harrison, the future Positivist leader, emphasised with passionate eloquence the true inwardness of the manifesto, at the same time inviting the Essayists to abandon their futile attempts at a compromise between the old beliefs and the new. Bishop Wilberforce followed suit with an article in the *Quarterly Review*, accepting the *Westminster* estimate of the Essayists, but denouncing them as traitors to Christian truth. At his suggestion, also, the whole Bench of Bishops joined in a public protest against the volume. Finally, Arthur Stanley, himself an advanced but extremely reticent Broad Churchman, summed up the situation in the *Edinburgh Review*

with that sort of impartiality which consists in distributing more or less scathing censures all round, his own personal friends Temple and Jowett being alone excepted from the general condemnation.

All these discussions excited public interest to the highest pitch, and the printing-presses could barely keep pace with the demand for a book supposed to have shaken Christianity to its foundations.

Baden Powell, the most advanced Rationalist of the band, had died soon after the publication of *Essays and Reviews*. Of the five remaining clerical contributors only two, Williams and Wilson, had laid themselves open to any tangible charge of heresy, and these two, as it happened, were also beneficed clergymen. They were prosecuted before the Court of Arches, and acquitted on all but a few counts of the accusation. On this occasion the Judge decided that a clergyman might, consistently with his ordination vows, deny the historical accuracy or the moral soundness of any passage in the Bible. On the points where his judgment went against them, Williams and Wilson appealed to the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council, and obtained a reversal of the adverse sentence in every particular. Of the issues finally decided in their favour the most important related to the eternity of future punishment. The supreme tribunal declared, by the mouth of Lord Chancellor Westbury, that the formularies of the Church were not sufficiently distinct to warrant the condemnation of a clergyman who hoped for the ultimate salvation of the sinner.

Dr. Pusey and his Evangelical allies were less charitably disposed. They drew up a declaration of belief in Scriptural infallibility and the eternity of hell, which every clergyman was invited "for the love of God" to sign. Less than half of those in holy orders responded to this touching appeal; and few names carrying much authority figured in the list.

For those to whom faith means the negation of reason the occasion offered by Pusey must have seemed singularly well-timed. Not long before his declaration was circulated the untrustworthiness of various Biblical statements had been mathematically demonstrated by a missionary Bishop, who was also the greatest living authority on arithmetic. While the foremost German and Dutch Hebraists were exhausting their ingenuity in trying to discover how many distinct documents had been laid under contribution by the compilers of the Pentateuch and the Book of Joshua, Dr. Colenso felt himself impelled by the naïve appeal of a Zulu convert to investigate the more elementary question, Are they true? A novice in the higher criticism, he at that time merely knew that geology had done much towards demolishing the first chapters of Genesis as genuine history. But a few months' labour led him to more destructive conclusions than all his predecessors put together had made good in two hundred years. What was more damaging to the credit of the priestly historians whose work has come down to us under the names of Moses and Joshua than their too literal acceptance of ancient mythical cosmogonies, it

appeared, from the Bishop's statistical method of criticism, that they had been guilty over and over again of deliberate fabrication, committed in the interest of their religious beliefs. This discovery came like a revelation to the Dutch critic Kuenen, and soon set him on the track of those new theories which, in his and Wellhausen's hands, have revolutionised the study of Old Testament history and converted the most orthodox divines to views much more advanced than those originally put forward by Colenso.

It is doubtful whether the Bishop of Natal would have felt justified in publishing the result of his inquiries had not the judgment of the Court of Arches proved that their avowal was quite compatible with the retention of his position in the Church. Alluding to the academic rank of the Essayists, Lord Shaftesbury prayed to be saved from the tyranny of Professors. So far from being tyrants, Baden Powell, Rowland Williams, and Jowett were enabling the English middle classes to think for themselves. "By all means let us have free inquiry," said Disraeli, "but let it be from free inquirers." Not only were the clergy free inquirers, but they were guiding the more timid steps of the laity in what Carlyle called the Exodus from Houndsditch—the deliverance from Rabbinical superstition.

Privately some of the Essayists—and indeed some of their opponents also—were known to hold far more subversive opinions than those they put in print; indeed, the hostility to their printed opinions partly arose from a knowledge of their conversational utterances. Not only a desire to

preserve their social position, but also a vague dread of revolutionary convulsions as a result of having Rationalism diffused among the working classes, may have been the excuse for a reticence rather apt to be confounded with insincerity.

Be this as it may, no such need of reticence was felt among those whose mental balance the Broad Church were fearful of upsetting. A tradition not only of free thinking, but of plain speaking, had been kept up by the democratic working-class leaders ever since Thomas Paine; and we have seen to what lengths it was carried by Holyoake. In his hands, however, Secularism remained, like the Positivism of Comte, rather a constructive social doctrine ignoring theology than an aggressive criticism labouring to destroy it. A younger friend of Holyoake's, Charles Bradlaugh, gave Secularism this more aggressive character by setting up, in 1860, a journal called the *National Reformer*, an article in whose programme was avowed "antagonism to every known religious system," and especially to every form of Christianity.[1]

Bradlaugh and his colleagues carried on for several years an Atheistic propaganda by pamphlets and lectures which the upper and middle classes regarded with affected contempt and quite unaffected aversion. Public opinion had by this time advanced so far that the blasphemy laws were not put in action, but a good deal of ruffianism was employed for the purpose of suppressing free discussion, against which the sufferers could not obtain legal redress. Where public debates

[1] *Life of Charles Bradlaugh*, vol. i., p. 120.

between the Freethinkers and their clerical opponents were tolerated, insulting and mendacious personalities too often passed as good substitutes for argument on the orthodox side.

Just as the religious crisis was becoming acute, Herbert Spencer began to publish in serial form the first of those important works which won for him during his life a more extended reputation than any other philosopher in the world's history has ever enjoyed. It was called *First Principles,* and its object was to establish on grounds of experience and of *a priori* reasoning combined the law of evolution as the most comprehensive of scientific generalisations. None knew better than Spencer how radically inconsistent was that law with the belief in a creating or interfering Providence ; and indeed a prime object of all his speculations was to show, so far as possible, that all phenomena are produced by mechanical causation. This was also what the founders of the *National Reformer* believed, and, in their opinion, such a doctrine left no room for anything that has ever been called a God or a religion. Spencer did not agree with their negations. The antiquity and wide diffusion of religion convinced him that there must be some truth mixed up with its errors. On the other hand, even those ultimate truths in which evolution itself is rooted leave us, he thinks, confronted by the inexplicable mystery of consciousness and existence itself, the dim sense of a Power behind phenomena, impossible either to define or to refine away. To recognise that this ever-present Power exists, but can never be known, is the essence of

religion, and also the reconciliation of religion with science.

All that Spencer tells us—and he tells us a good deal—about the Unknowable Power goes to identify it with the whole of what is. Such absoluteness necessarily excludes personality, which at any rate involves the antithesis of subject and object; and his psychology also suggests, to say the least of it, that there is no consciousness without a nervous system. Precisely for that reason, indeed, Spencer rejected the doctrine of personal immortality; and, although he afterwards came to find in the notion of a spirit surviving its mortal body the very root of religion itself, it did not occur to him that his pretended reconciliation of religion with science was thereby ruined at its base.

On the religious side, also, difficulties no less serious opposed themselves to the proffered alliance. Worship has always had for its object not an abstraction or a negation, but a living, concrete individual, conceived as resembling the highest types of humanity; while religious belief, so far from being directed towards an Unknowable, habitually appeals for confirmation to a revelation of its object, given through a book, or a community, or a set of mysterious intimations whose import it is the office of a privileged order to declare.

Some years after the appearance of *First Principles,* Professor Huxley, a friend and admirer of Spencer's, coined the word "Agnosticism" to designate the attitude of himself and his school towards theology. As originally used, it served to connote at once the impassable barrier that separated

them from all the Churches, and the almost imperceptible shading that distinguished them from the followers of Bradlaugh. Like all very popular party-names, Agnosticism paid the penalty of success by losing the perfectly definite meaning it was at first intended to convey, and by becoming associated with all sorts of hazy scepticisms which the original Agnostics would have been the first to disown. An impression has thus been created that those who reject the popular religion have no alternative but a comprehensive profession of ignorance about themselves and the world in which they live. An older and somewhat less ambiguous word, "Rationalism," has been coming into more favour of recent years to denote the position of those who trust their reason so far as it goes, while refusing to believe any proposition on evidence that would not be admitted in natural science or in the affairs of common life, and absolutely rejecting what is inconsistent either with itself or with any truth generally acknowledged as such.

A *History of the Rise and Influence of the Spirit of Rationalism*, by the late Mr. Lecky, published in 1865, did much to promote a better appreciation among English readers of what reason has done to further the happiness of mankind by insensibly undermining the credence once given to various noxious superstitions. Lecky was not himself a deep or a logical thinker, and his dependence on authority is the reverse of rational; but his suave and conciliatory style did much to procure an entry for Buckle's ideas in circles which Buckle's extremely plain speaking had tended to alienate and alarm.

Lecky called himself a Christian, and no doubt he could claim the title with as good a right as many Broad Churchmen. The same may be said of the late Sir John Seeley, whose most celebrated work, *Ecce Homo,* also appeared in 1865. In form a survey of the life and work of Christ, the book is in reality a brilliant adaptation of the Gospel to modern Liberal politics, with nearly the whole supernatural element left out and Comte's religion of humanity dexterously put in its place. Some of the very elect were, perhaps not unwillingly, deceived, and Gladstone for one was so delighted with *Ecce Homo* and so satisfied with its orthodoxy that he afterwards made the author—who never put his name to it—Professor of Modern History at Cambridge. Lord Shaftesbury, on the other hand, said it was "vomited from the jaws of hell," which, if hell meant Positivism, was a rather strong way of stating a fact.

We have now reached a point of English history where the current of democratic opinion set going by the American War combines with the profounder current of religious liberalism to initiate and carry through the great legislative reforms by which the next five years are signalised.

Chapter XIII.

A STUDY IN EXPLOSIVES

The House of Commons which placed Lord Palmerston in power after the General Election of 1859 counted a nominal Liberal majority of fifty and a working Ministerial majority, on decisive party divisions, of less than twenty. Yet the veteran leader played the game with such skill that his administration is remembered as the most powerful and popular of the reign. The elections of July, 1865, gave him one last triumph, resulting as they did in a gain of twenty-five seats, counting fifty on a division. But the battle had been fought largely on the question of Parliamentary Reform, which he disliked, and on the merits of his Financial Minister, Gladstone, whose policy he viewed with extreme distrust. And what in the last resort told most decisively for Liberalism was the victory, in America, of the Northern Anti-slavery cause, to which Palmerston and Gladstone had been alike opposed. Not only had a democratic Republic, representing, as by this time was generally admitted, a most righteous cause, overcome at the cost of enormous sacrifices the most formidable rebellion known to history, but it had also treated the vanquished rebels with a magnanimity of which history offered no example.

Besides this general reaction on English opinion, the American War exercised other more indirect

effects on our domestic politics. It greatly strengthened a secret society known as the Fenian Brotherhood, formed for the purpose of making Ireland an independent State. Fenianism had begun in 1858, but attracted little attention until it enlisted American support. The constant stream of Irish emigration across the Atlantic would in any case have given Irish Nationalism a powerful body of sympathisers in the United States; and the experiences of war taught sympathy to assume a more aggressive shape. Many Irishmen had served in the Northern armies, where they acquired habits of military discipline; and some of these, when the restoration of peace threw them out of employment, made their way home to join the Fenian movement, which under their direction quickly developed into a formidable conspiracy against English rule. Their agitation had little success in promoting insurrection, but much success in drawing the attention of Great Britain to the chronic grievances of the sister island.

Of these grievances the most intelligible to English and Scotch opinion was the existence of a Protestant Establishment among a Catholic people, the fact that nearly all the religious endowments of the country went to relieve a small and comparatively wealthy minority from the duty of maintaining their religion at their own expense, as the Presbyterians and the Catholics were for the most part obliged to do. We have seen how that very moderate concession to religious justice known as the Appropriation Clause was successfully resisted in the House of Lords thirty years before, probably because it excited no enthusiasm

among the English people. But now, thanks no doubt to the great Freethought movement of the previous decade, English Dissenters and Scotch Presbyterians, formerly so bigoted in their hostility to Rome, were ready to join hands with Irish Catholics in demanding the destruction of Protestant ascendancy in Ireland. These religionists would have maintained with complete sincerity that modern science and modern criticism had left their faith stronger than ever. But it remained true that the effect of Rationalism had been to make sectarian differences count for less in the face of a common danger than the fundamental principles on which all Christians were agreed.

By a still more remarkable change of opinion, not only the English Nonconformists, but some High Churchmen also, had come to approve in principle of Irish Disestablishment. Foremost among these stood Gladstone, destined before long to make it the first article in the Liberal programme. The mere suspicion of such a possibility led to his rejection as her representative by the University of Oxford at the General Election of 1865; but on that occasion he received the support of John Keble, whose Assize Sermon had started the Tractarian Movement thirty-two years before, and who had so strongly resented Earl Grey's suppression of ten superfluous Irish bishoprics. More significantly still, in conversation with J. H. Newman about the much more drastic course anticipated from Gladstone, Keble whispered, "And is not that just?" We must suppose that the Tractarian leaders had advanced so far towards

Rome and away from Evangelicalism as to be favourably disposed to what would benefit Irish Catholics at the expense of Irish Evangelicals. And this was because Newman had taught them to look to Rome as a bulwark against the rising rationalism of the age.

The overthrow of the Slave Power and the abolition of slavery over the whole territory of the United States was followed within six months by a negro outbreak in Jamaica. So far as I know, these two events have never been brought into relation as cause and effect. But it seems not unlikely that there was some connection between them, for the immense importance given to the negro race by the war can hardly have failed to react on the coloured population of Jamaica, rousing them to a keener sense of the wrongs, real or imaginary, under which they suffered, and exciting hopes of redress, to be won, if necessary, by armed force. At any rate, on October 11th, 1865, a riot took place at Morant Bay. Eighteen white men were killed, thirty-two were wounded, and two houses were burned down. Edward John Eyre, governor of the island, at once proclaimed martial law, and launched his soldiers on the black population of the disaffected district, apparently with a free hand to commit whatever atrocities they pleased. For every white man killed more than twenty blacks were executed; for every white man wounded nearly twenty blacks, some of them women, were flogged. In one place the tails of the cat were twisted and knotted with wires. A thousand native houses were burned down. Owing

to the summary character of the proceedings, various persons were executed whose participation in the riot could not be proved. Indeed, some negroes were shot down merely because they ran away from the troops. On October 30th, by Eyre's own admission, the insurrection had been thoroughly crushed. Yet martial law with all its horrors was allowed to continue for nearly a fortnight longer. Finally a coloured man named Gordon, a member of the House of Representatives, accused without adequate proof of having instigated the insurrection, was judicially murdered by Eyre's express orders, at a time when the case might have been reserved for a regular trial without any danger to the English inhabitants of the island.

Lord Palmerston died while these events were in progress. Had he lived, he would probably have supported and rewarded Governor Eyre; nor by doing this would he have forfeited any popularity in the country—at least among the bulk of the upper and middle classes, who looked on black men as entitled to no more consideration than gorillas. But with his departure a new *régime* had already begun. Earl Russell, who succeeded to the Premiership, and Gladstone, who succeeded to the leadership of the House of Commons, whatever their private opinions about Eyre might be, were under the necessity of not alienating the Radical section of their party, in view of the Reform Bill they intended to introduce; nor was there any doubt about the attitude of that section on the present occasion. No sooner had detailed accounts of the atrocities perpetrated in

Jamaica begun to come in than a demand for immediate inquiry into the conduct of the responsible parties was raised by Radical politicians and journalists, supported by some of the most advanced thinkers of the age. Under pressure from this quarter Eyre was first suspended and then recalled, after a Commission sent out to collect information on the spot had brought to light the full extent of the enormities to which his sanction had been given.

An unofficial committee was formed for the purpose of having Eyre's guilt or innocence decided in the only regular manner—by putting him on his trial before an English Court of Justice. At its head stood John Stuart Mill, then at the zenith of his reputation and of his intellectual powers. His *Examination of Sir William Hamilton's Philosophy,* published in the spring of 1865, had destroyed the authority of the reactionary Scotch metaphysician at a single blow, ruining at the same time the elaborate framework of sceptical sophistry by which Hamilton's Oxford disciple, Mansel, had tried to prop up the immoral dogmas of popular Christianity. He had also recently brought out a volume on Auguste Comte, giving a luminous summary of the great French thinker's system, and distinguishing with rare ability and impartiality between the truths and errors that it embodies. He had been returned to Parliament free of expense for Westminster, as of all reasoners the most competent to defend a wide extension of the suffrage against the redoubtable attacks of Robert Lowe, who, although himself on all other points a strong Liberal, had been adopted by the

Tories as their spokesman in the coming conflict on Parliamentary Reform.

Around Mill, as members of the Jamaica Committee, were grouped such men of light and leading in the spheres of thought and action as Darwin, Spencer, Wallace, Professor Huxley, Professor Goldwin Smith, Leslie Stephen, and Mr. Frederic Harrison. But, as usually happens in England, the intellectualists were by no means unanimous. Carlyle, who hated the negro race, gave the support of his irrelevantly picturesque rhetoric to Governor Eyre. Tennyson, Ruskin, Froude, Kingsley, Murchison, and Tyndall more or less openly took the same side. On the whole, the division of opinion as regarded the Jamaica question corresponded to the division on the American War, and, like that, indicated a conflict between two widely divergent ideals of society—more than that, between two different theories of the world; for, as Herbert Spencer has observed, "the evolutionists, considering their small number, contributed a far larger proportion to the committee than any other class."[1]

So strong was the feeling in favour of Eyre that the Jamaica Committee failed in their efforts to put him on his trial, although Lord Chief Justice Cockburn charged the Old Bailey Grand Jury strongly against him. But, as Mill says, their efforts "gave an emphatic warning to those who might be tempted to similar guilt hereafter that, though they might escape the actual sentence of a criminal tribunal, they were not safe against being

[1] *Autobiography*, vol. ii., p. 143.

put to some trouble and expense in order to avoid it."[1]

In addition to the Fenian and Jamaican troubles, the new Government had to deal with a more immediate difficulty—the cattle plague, a destructive pestilence for which no remedy could be found except the slaughter of the diseased animals, and of those exposed to the risk of infection. Accordingly, when Parliament met a Bill was introduced prescribing this drastic remedy against the spread of the plague, and awarding an amount of compensation to the owners of the animals sacrificed suited rather to the interests and wishes of a land-owning oligarchy than to the just claims of the people at large, who were already suffering severely by a great rise in the price of meat. An absurdly high amount of compensation was assigned in the first Ministerial proposal, and two-thirds of the sum were to be provided by a local rate, one-third only being raised by a special tax on cattle. Thus the owners would be paid twice over—first by the legal indemnity, and then by the rise in prices. Against this iniquitous arrangement Mill protested in a speech which drew down on him the bitter hatred of the whole Tory party, and of not a few lukewarm Liberals into the bargain. His recommendations were not fully adopted, but they had the effect of reducing the proposed compensation by a considerable amount.

While the questions associated with Ireland,

[1] *Autobiography*, p. 299.

Jamaica, and the cattle plague greatly aggravated the difficulties and responsibilities of the Russell-Gladstone Government, they also made the tension between the respective representatives of advanced and of conservative opinion more acute, thus adding enormously to the virulence of party feeling on the issue in which all other differences were soon to be swallowed up—the issue of Parliamentary Reform. The newly-elected House of Commons included a much larger proportion of serious reformers than its predecessor, and the two chief Ministers were convinced advocates of popular suffrage. They brought in a Bill which would have given votes to 144,000 working men, together with a much larger number of middle-class householders. Mill, Bright, and the Radicals generally gave this exceedingly mild proposal a warm support; but the mere fact of their approval seemed to awaken a corresponding strength of opposition on the other side, recalling the passionate hostility evoked by the Reform Bill of 1831, and backed by arguments of much the same description, amounting to a general claim that our representative system was working admirably, and could not be improved.

This general objection to all change as such might not have counted for much, even with professed Conservatives, had it not been the expression of a more specific animosity towards the class whose partial enfranchisement was in contemplation. There was in 1866 among well-to-do people, more than at any time since the collapse of Chartism, a definite dread and hatred of the working classes, or at least of their Trade Unions,

which had been smouldering through the Palmerstonian period, and which, although partially alleviated by the experiences of the Cotton Famine, broke out again at the termination of the American War. In order to understand how this state of feeling came to exist we must go back to an earlier period of English industrial history; but the digression will not detain us long.

Previous to 1824 combinations to procure an increase of wages were more or less forbidden by law and punished as crimes. Among other consequences of the great Liberal movement begun soon after the accession of George IV., complete freedom of contract was obtained in that year, chiefly through the efforts of two Radicals, Francis Place and Joseph Hume. This concession led to an epidemic of strikes, frequently accompanied by rioting and outrage, with the result that in 1825 a new Bill was passed "prohibiting any person doing any act or making any threat to induce any manufacturer to alter the rules of his factory, or any workman to accept or leave any employment, or to join any club";[1] and this law continued in force for more than forty years. Nevertheless, the operatives continued to fight for an increase of wages or for shorter hours, with varying degrees of success, by means of strikes, which their Trade Unions proved highly efficacious instruments for carrying through. The masters retorted by lock-outs—that is to say, by refusing to employ men who, though consenting to work for the usual wages, either belonged to Trade Unions or were suspected

[1] Walpole, *History of England,* vol. ii., p. 181.

of contributing to the support of strikes. This sort of civil war raged with particular virulence after the commercial crisis of 1857, and led to a great pitched battle between employers and employed in the building trade, lasting from November, 1858, to February, 1860. On that occasion neither side succeeded in carrying its point, but the conflict left Trade Unionism in a stronger position than before.[1]

At that time "society," and indeed the educated classes generally, looked on strikes not only as a most disagreeable interruption to business, but also as a revolt against the natural law of supply and demand. They took this view on trust from the leading political economists, all of whom, including J. S. Mill, taught the existence of something that they called the Wages Fund—that is, "a sum of wealth unconditionally devoted to the wages of labour," and limited, "at any given moment, to a predetermined amount.....so that, the sum to be divided being fixed, the wages of each depend solely on the number of participants." Thus strikes could not possibly increase wages or prevent them from falling, although indirectly they might, and actually did, lower wages by diminishing the fund whence they were paid.[2]

By a singular inadvertence the economists long failed to observe that the employer's profits constituted an additional fund on which it was possible for his men to encroach to any extent short of what would leave him without a motive for carrying on

[1] Sidney and Beatrice Webb, *History of Trade Unionism*, pp. 213–14.

[2] Mill, *Dissertations and Discussions*, vol. iv., pp. 43 *sqq.*

the business—a fact first pointed out by W. T. Thornton in 1869, and immediately accepted as true by Mill.

Working men naturally set little store on a science whose teachings were contradicted by experience before they were corrected by theory. One of the new members of Parliament, Thomas Hughes, the author of *Tom Brown's Schooldays*, who had been elected in the labour interest, speaking in the debate on the second reading of Gladstone's Reform Bill, vainly urged on his hearers the expediency of giving working men a share in the national representation, precisely because their views on the price of labour and the laws of supply and demand differed so widely from the middle and upper-class theory. The only effect of his arguments was to send votes over to the other side.

On the occasion of Lord Russell's previous abortive Reform Bills no enthusiasm had been shown for them by the unenfranchised masses, nor any anger when they failed; and this popular indifference furnished Conservatives on both sides of the House with a standing argument in favour of letting the subject sleep. In fact, the wage-earners had come to believe that their condition could be much more effectively bettered by means of Trade Unionism than by such a remote and feeble share in legislation as a tenth or so of the whole voting power would bestow. But the Parliamentary debates of 1866 totally changed their views. What was seen to be withheld with such alarm seemed to be worth demanding with equal passion on the part of those to whom it was denied;

and the more so as indications were not wanting of a desire to destroy the Trade Unions by Act of Parliament, and to deal with resistance to such a measure by suspending the Habeas Corpus Act, as in Ireland, or by proclaiming martial law, as in Jamaica.

I have said that the Parliament of 1865 included many more sincere reformers than its predecessor. But they numbered altogether less than half the whole House; so that by allying themselves with every section of discontented Liberalism in turn the Tory Opposition at last succeeded in wrecking Gladstone's very moderate Bill. The Liberal Ministry at once resigned, and Disraeli (with Lord Derby as his nominal chief) took office for the third time, and retained it two years and a half by faithfully copying that policy of Conservative surrender on which he had poured such fierce sarcasm when Sir Robert Peel inaugurated it less than a quarter of a century before, without Peel's justification that his change of policy was necessary for the safety of the country.

As Leader of the House of Commons Gladstone had failed utterly; but his fall made him a popular hero, and his name became a rallying cry for the new enthusiasm on behalf of Reform which had spread from the North to London. He had told the opponents of his Bill that the working men were their own flesh and blood; and the masses do not forget such words. Before the formation of a new Government had been officially announced crowds of working men were parading the streets of London with unmistakable indications of the

side on which their sympathies were enlisted. Three weeks later it was announced that a great Reform demonstration would be held in Hyde Park. Contrary to the advice of their Home Secretary, the Government closed the park gates against the meeting. On this the responsible leaders withdrew, leaving behind them, however, a disorderly crowd, who broke down the park railings, spread over the enclosure, and did much mischief to the flowers and shrubs. This rather childish exhibition proved no less effective for its purpose than the terrible riots at Bristol had been a generation before. On this occasion much more serious consequences might have happened, as a body called the Reform League summoned another meeting to be held in the park a few days afterwards, at a time when troops were being kept in readiness to prevent it. Mill, who could hardly have been mistaken on the subject, tells us that the League were only dissuaded from carrying out their intention by his remonstrances—a fact which all the historians of the period but one have passed over in silence.[1]

During the subsequent autumn and winter the working men adopted a more efficacious and less dangerous method of showing their opinions, by marching through the streets of London in long processions, among which those organised by the Trade Unions made the most conspicuous figure. The men who walked in these processions presented such a well-to-do appearance that the spectators who watched them from the club windows asked

[1] Mill's *Autobiography*, pp. 190–1. Herbert Paul, *Modern England*, vol. iii., p. 55.

one another in surprise, Was it possible these people could not afford to live in a ten-pound house? Such may, in fact, have been their rental; but as a class their interests obviously led them to combine with the householders who paid less rather than with those who paid more than that modest sum.

Payment of a seven-pound rental had been the qualification for exercising the borough franchise fixed by Gladstone's Bill, and an amendment proposing to substitute a rating for a rental value was what finally wrecked it in Committee. The object in view was merely to diminish the number of new electors, as houses are habitually rated at a figure below their letting value. But the distinction between a rating and a rental franchise acquired a new significance when Disraeli introduced a Reform Bill of his own in the Session of 1867. After a variety of abortive schemes presented and withdrawn for the sole purpose of keeping his party in office, the Tory leader proposed a measure the most important provision of which gave the borough franchise to all householders rated for the relief of the poor. Now, as regarded the payment of rates there was no uniform rule in English boroughs as to whether it should be made by the householder or by his landlord. It was a question determined in each instance by the majority of the ratepayers themselves. The more general arrangement was that the landlord should pay, although, of course, he indemnified himself by raising the rent. In that case the tenant was called a compound householder. But there were certain boroughs where this arrangement did not exist, and there a rating franchise would have meant

Household Suffrage pure and simple. It was a piece of the grossest political hypocrisy to pretend, as Disraeli did, that such an accident determined a man's fitness or the contrary to join in the choice of a Parliamentary representative. Finally, to the great astonishment of both parties, the Tory leader found his way out of this ridiculous position by accepting the proposal of a Liberal member abolishing the compound householder, and directing that none but occupiers should be rated for the relief of the poor within the limit of Parliamentary boroughs. This amounted to unqualified Household Suffrage, which Disraeli had declared he would never accept. In what way the compound householder would become better fitted for the exercise of his new privilege by being subjected to the gratuitous inconvenience of paying his rates in person instead of by proxy did not appear. Nor, in fact, was he destined to benefit long by that magical operation. Two years subsequently the old system of compounding was quietly reinstated, without depriving the compounder of his vote.

Soon after passing his Bill, or rather the Bill forced on him by the Liberal Opposition, Disraeli described himself in a public speech as having educated the Conservative party to believe in democratic reform. Finding that the assertion provoked some murmurs, he first altered it into "we"—that is, Lord Derby and himself—"were educating the Conservative party," and finally into "the Conservative party were educating the country." In each version the claim can only be described as an impudent falsehood. So far from being educated by the Conservative party, the

country taught them, in unmistakable accents, that they must yield to its demands without delay. Lord Derby, who called Household Suffrage "a leap in the dark," never pretended to be convinced, still less to convince others, of its expediency. As for Disraeli himself, the only educator we can compare him to is the Faliscan schoolmaster of early Roman history who surrendered his young charges to Camillus. Three Secretaries of State, who may be taken as fairly representing what the party really thought, resigned rather than agree to a much more limited franchise than that ultimately accepted. One of them, the future Lord Salisbury, was credited with an article in the *Quarterly Review,* passionately denouncing what it called the Conservative surrender. As for the rank and file, they simply yielded to the obligations of party discipline and to the dread of a dissolution in case they refused to follow their chief.

If Disraeli expected his party to gain by the Tory Reform Bill, he was grievously mistaken. Their domestic policy suffered a crushing defeat on an appeal to the people in 1868; their foreign policy a defeat still more crushing in 1880. His dream of restoring the royal authority has not been fulfilled; his friends of the territorial aristocracy have yielded to considerable inroads on their dignities and proprietary rights; an entire branch of the Anglican Establishment has been lopped off, and its privileges as against Dissent have been sensibly curtailed. Tory statesmen, beginning with himself, have, it is true, enjoyed extensive terms of office; but this, which would have come

to pass under any suffrage, has been due to the mistakes and divisions of their opponents far more than to any popular preference for themselves; while any attempt to revive old Tory principles has met with speedy discomfiture on an appeal to the democratic vote. Even the office for whose tenure they held no sacrifice too great has had to be shared with dissentient Liberals, and the coalitions which, according to Disraeli, England does not love have been used to strengthen the position of those on whom the mantle of this modern Hebrew prophet has fallen.

Before the working classes could enter into possession of their new privileges the organisations that had led them to victory found their very existence put in peril. An outrage perpetrated at Sheffield in October, 1866, by order of a Trade Union, coming as it did after a long series of similar atrocities, excited public opinion to fresh manifestations of hostility against the system of which they were held to be the inevitable result, and led to the appointment of a Royal Commission for the investigation of the whole subject. Under promise of impunity certain witnesses were induced to come forward and give a circumstantial narrative of the crimes committed by themselves or at their instigation in order to compel non-unionist workmen "to join the Union or to punish them for their refusal." The means of coercion ranged from putting needles into the brick-makers' clay for the purpose of injuring their hands to blowing up their houses with gunpowder or shooting them dead. Sheffield had the worst record for outrages;

but Manchester and other places were not far behind.[1] Only a small minority of Trade Unions were implicated in these crimes; but the public indignation provoked by their disclosure extended itself to Unionism in general, and led the employers to hope for its abolition.

Meanwhile, the prosecution of a defaulting Trade Union treasurer had elicited an important legal decision from the Court of Queen's Bench. It appeared that the society which sought redress had no claim to protection against the embezzlement of its funds, the reason given being that its objects, if not actually criminal, were yet so far in restraint of trade as to render it an illegal association.[2] The same judgment applied equally to all the Trade Unions in the country, classing them with illegal associations, and placing their funds—which, in the aggregate, amounted to a quarter of a million—at the mercy of their dishonest employees.[3]

Fortunately for their cause, the Trade Unions had enlisted the support of the English Positivists, a small band of high-minded, able, and eloquent thinkers, who had recently formed themselves into a society for the propagation of Auguste Comte's teaching in England. Unlike Mill, G. H. Lewes, and Harriet Martineau, these new disciples did not stop short at the intellectual side of Positivism, but dwelt also and more particularly on its religious and ethical aspects. Without being in any way affected by Comte's theories, or indeed by French influences of any kind, Trade Unionism appealed to

[1] Molesworth, *History of England*, vol. iii., pp. 370–75.
[2] Webb, *History of Trade Unionism*, p. 245.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 246.

these men as a practical and efficacious protest against the anarchic individualism of the orthodox political economy, which Comte also regarded with extreme disfavour. While joining in the general condemnation of the Sheffield outrages, two members of the Positivist Society, Professor Beesly and Dr. Richard Congreve, had not hesitated to brave the public opinion of the upper classes by placing them in the same category of crimes with the atrocities perpetrated by Governor Eyre and his confederates in Jamaica. Another Positivist, Mr. Frederic Harrison, author of the article on "Neo-Christianity," in the *Westminster Review,* which first revealed the full meaning and significance of *Essays and Reviews*, had so thoroughly won the confidence of the Unionist leaders that they obtained his appointment to a place on the Royal Commission for inquiring into the facts of Trade Unionism. While holding that position he, in conjunction with Thomas Hughes, already mentioned as the Parliamentary champion of labour, conducted the Trade Union case against its opponents. Without being able to persuade the majority of the Commissioners to adopt their view in its entirety, they succeeded in dissipating some prejudices against the Unions; while their Minority Report, described as "a complete charter of Trade-Union liberty," "became for seven years the political programme of the Trade Unionists."[1] "It advocated the removal of all special legislation relating to labour contracts, on the principle, first, that no act should be illegal if committed by a

[1] Webb, *History of Trade Unionism,* p. 255.

workman unless it was equally illegal if committed by any other person; and, secondly, that no act by a combination of men should be regarded as criminal if it would not have been criminal in a single person."[1]

With a view to getting this programme passed into law, Mr. Harrison strongly urged on the newly-enfranchised working men the importance of registering themselves as voters and pledging candidates to support their interests in Parliament. We shall see hereafter what were the fruits of this agitation. In the meantime it will be instructive to note a good effect of the Reform Act independent of any actual change in the labour laws. By conferring political equality on the working men it raised them in the estimation of the masters, and enabled the two to sit side by side on boards of conciliation. "The employers used to say that it would degrade them to sit at the same board with their workmen; but it is noticeable that directly the political independence of the latter was recognised, as soon as he *(sic)* possessed the franchise, these objections began to disappear."[2]

English public opinion—or at least the public opinion of the governing classes—habitually yields to violence what it will not yield to reason. The raid on Hyde Park had won Reform; the Sheffield murders had drawn attention to the claims of labour; Fenian outrages were now to procure a certain measure of redress for the wrongs of Ireland. In September, 1867, two Fenians on their way to prison in Manchester were rescued by a band of

[1] Webb, *History of Trade Unionism*, p. 254.
[2] Arnold Toynbee, *The Industrial Revolution*, p. 149.

armed men, and the police sergeant who had charge of the van conveying them was shot dead —an offence for which the murderer himself and two others were hanged. Three weeks after their execution an attempt was made to rescue two other Fenians from Clerkenwell by blowing up the prison wall with gunpowder. The attempt failed, but twelve persons were killed and a hundred and twenty others injured by the explosion. Disraeli, who since February, 1868, had become in name as well as in reality Prime Minister, replied by a fresh suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act in Ireland, and by an Irish Reform Bill giving the franchise to only half as many electors in proportion to the population as in England. Then his great rival seized the opportunity to rally the whole Liberal party, which alike in office and opposition had broken from his lead on the Reform question, round the standard of religious equality. Before the end of March Gladstone began his campaign against the Irish Church, and on the morning of May 1st he carried a resolution advising its disestablishment and disendowment by a majority of 65. Thirty-one years earlier the far milder proposals known as the Appropriation Clause had been carried by a majority of only 33.[1] This significant advance, as I have already taken occasion to point out, is an index of the ground gained by rationalism in the interval. And, as if to supply a further confirmation of the same momentous change, an Act for the abolition of compulsory Church rates was carried in the same Session by

[1] Spencer Walpole, *History of England,* vol. iv., p. 21.

the same statesman, who had begun life as a champion of ecclesiastical privilege.

Nor was this only a Parliamentary, a political, or a Nonconformist victory. The approaching fall of the Irish Establishment was welcomed with acclamation by the intellectual and literary classes, who also disdainfully rejected the old Whig idea, now once more put forward, of concurrent endowment—that is, the distribution of the confiscated revenues among the three Irish Churches in proportion to their numerical strength. In their opinion the time had gone by for subsidising religious teaching in any form, for that would be merely building up what at no distant period would have to be pulled down again.

It only remained to ascertain by an appeal to the country what the newly-enfranchised classes thought on the subject. Their answer came in figures whose meaning could not be doubted. Household Suffrage in the English boroughs returned a great Liberal majority. Scotland, the best educated part of the United Kingdom, returned a Liberal majority of five to one. The Liberal majority in the whole House was 120. Mill's defeat at Westminster nearly consoled the Tories for this tremendous disaster. But the great philosopher's work was done. During his brief Parliamentary career Mill had done England a service not easily matched among the achievements of private members. In a single speech of remarkable eloquence he convinced Gladstone, and eventually Gladstone's pupil Stafford Northcote, that a provision should be made for paying off the National Debt while our resources are still available for the

purpose. England's prosperity depends on the productivity of her coalfields, and it is certain that these will be exhausted within a measurable period of time. It is, therefore, desirable to clear off our present liabilities before that fatal moment arrives. There may be stronger arguments for establishing a Sinking Fund than this; but none have so stimulated the imagination of statesmen as Mill's appeal on behalf of posterity, urged with impressive dignity on the House of Commons more than forty years ago. Immediately on the delivery of his speech a considerable sum was set aside for the reduction of the Debt; and from the second year after his death, which took place in 1873, a regular provision for its progressive extinction has formed part of our financial system.

replaced by others who undertook to pay a higher rent. In Ulster alone tenant farmers possessed, by the custom of the country, a right of property in the goodwill of their holdings, which, when the land was relet, they could sell for a substantial sum to the new occupier; but this custom was not recognised by law.

A Bill, introduced in February, 1870, proposed to deal with these grievances by giving the Ulster custom force of law, by extending it to the whole of Ireland, and by providing that the tenant, in case of eviction, should be compensated for improvements made by him, the insertion of any proviso to the contrary in leases being forbidden. Bright as a private member, and Mill in a pamphlet entitled *England and Ireland* (1868), had proposed the partial buying out of the landlords, and the sale of their estates on easy terms to the occupiers, as the most satisfactory solution of the land question. Bright was now a Cabinet Minister; and in deference to his authority clauses were introduced into the Irish Land Bill directing advances of public money to be made for the purpose of enabling tenants to buy their holdings in cases where the landlords were willing to sell. Gladstone, who framed and conducted the measure, had no belief in peasant proprietors, and Bright was disabled by illness from pushing his favourite scheme; nor did the purchase clauses prove adequate to carry it out. It is, however, interesting to observe that two such men as Mill and Bright, one of them representing the Benthamite school of philosophy and the other the Manchester school of politics, should have abandoned the traditions of *laissez-*

faire in favour of State intervention for the purpose of giving the poor advantages which, under a system of free competition and free contract, they had been unable to secure.

The same Session that saw the first considerable attempt to interfere with economic freedom in reference to Irish land tenure saw also a much more sweeping interference with the economic laws of supply and demand in their relation to the elementary education of the English people. It will be remembered that State aid to education first began after the Reform Act of 1832, and that it then took the form of money grants to voluntary associations whose interest in the subject was chiefly religious. Under this system the number of schools built, and of children attending them, steadily increased. But it fell far short of the whole number wanted; and the quality of the instruction given was not satisfactory. With a view to its improvement, Robert Lowe, who practically controlled the Education Department from 1859 to 1864, introduced what was called the system of payment by results—that is to say, the amount of money granted to the State-aided schools was made to depend on the number of children whose proficiency in the elementary subjects suited to their age or standing was such as to satisfy the Government inspectors.

Lowe's standards only took secular knowledge into account; and this sort of testing gave great offence to the clerical school managers, whose interest did not lie with the three R's, but with a fourth R—namely, religion, which was not allowed

to count for anything in the qualifying examinations. Under the lead of Lord Robert Cecil, afterwards so famous as Lord Salisbury, the Parliamentary obscurantists drove Lowe from office, not much, as would seem, to the displeasure of his colleagues, on whom he revenged himself by wrecking their Reform Bill in 1866. On the passing of Household Suffrage he uttered the famous apophthegm, "We must educate our masters." And now, as Chancellor of the Exchequer in Gladstone's Ministry, he belonged to a Government with an unrivalled opportunity for redeeming that obligation.[1]

They did not show themselves altogether equal to the situation. W. E. Forster, the Minister charged with preparing the new Education Bill, was not a statesman of high intellect or wide views. But as an educational enthusiast, not belonging to any religious denomination, he had the advantage of most of his colleagues, and was in some ways a more advanced reformer than the Prime Minister himself. His Bill marked a considerable improvement on the existing system. It provided that the denominational schools in receipt of State aid should henceforth be subject to undenominational inspection, and that no child who attended such schools should be forced to receive religious instruction of which its parents disapproved. This

[1] Lowe had begun life as an Oxford coach, but he had no practical knowledge of elementary teaching, and his system of payment by results exercised a most baneful influence on the schools, where it greatly stimulated cramming, and led to the treatment of children as machines for obtaining increased grants. This, however, does not alter the fact that he fell on the question of religious *versus* secular education.

provision, known as the Conscience Clause, had been first proposed by the Education Department in 1853; but, owing to the violent resistance of the Church managers, had not been insisted on until 1864. It was now re-enacted under a more stringent form, and definitely accepted in principle by the bigots who had fought against it so long. Where no efficient schools existed, Boards were to be created with power to levy rates "either to assist voluntary schools or to establish schools of their own."[1] And, subject of course to a Conscience Clause, they were free to settle what form of religious instruction should be followed, or even to order that none should be given. In addition to what they drew from the rates, the new schools were to receive a grant from the Consolidated Fund, and the children attending them were to pay a small fee. Finally, the Boards might enforce the attendance of all children whose education was not otherwise provided for, but they were not bound to enforce it. Forster himself would have preferred absolute compulsion; but he had the majority of the Cabinet against him.[2]

It will be seen that the Bill, as at first framed, while in some ways restricting the evils of the sectarian system, in other ways perpetuated and extended them. The outrageous provision enabling the School Boards to have whatever religion they chose taught at the public expense was, indeed, subsequently withdrawn, and replaced by the famous Cowper-Temple clause, directing that in rate-supported schools "no catechism or religious

[1] Sir H. Craik, *The State in its Relation to Education*, p. 92.
[2] H. Paul, *Modern England*, vol. iii., p. 216.

formulary distinctive of any particular denomination shall be taught";[1] while the Boards themselves, instead of being appointed by the vestries or other local bodies, as had been originally provided, were handed over to direct popular election. On the other hand, the denominational schools, which in practice were mostly Church schools, continued to be subsidised by the Exchequer, and the subsidy was even raised from one-third to one-half of the total cost; besides which, "by the twenty-fifth clause, School Boards were enabled to pay in denominational schools the fees of parents who, though not paupers, were unable to pay them."[2] "Training schools were left mostly in the hands of the sects, so that almost the only teachers to be procured by the model unsectarian schools were persons brought up in the lines of active sectarianism."[3]

What made the new lease of life given to the old system not only a theoretical injustice, but also a great practical mischief, was the proved inefficiency of the denominational schools. This had been brought to light by the requirements of Lowe's Revised Code, with its system of payment by results. To pass in its highest standard "a child must be able to read with fluency and expression, to write a short letter, and to work rule-of-three sums and fractions." Now, "of the two million children on the school registers in 1872 only 8,819 passed without failure in the three

[1] Elementary Education Act, 32 and 34 Vic., clause 14.

[2] Spencer Walpole, *History of Twenty-five Years,* vol. ii., p. 410.

[3] John Morley, *The Struggle for National Education,* p. 15.

subjects."[1] And this highest standard, that so few could succeed in, was "below the lowest Saxon, Prussian, or Swiss standard, even for the country schools." Where we had never passed 20,000 children in one year, Prussia, with a smaller population, passed nineteen times that number every year.[2]

Such, according to Mr. Morley, was "the consequence of entrusting public money.....to little knots of managers" engrossed in the interests of "their sect and its dogmas and shibboleths."[3]

The inspectors of training schools for teachers had to report a similar range of deficiencies higher up in the educational scale. The pupils acquitted themselves creditably in Holy Scripture, but fell below the mark in English grammar, mental arithmetic, and penmanship. The object was to make them "not only religious people, but sound Church people"; to impress them with the idea that "'there is no more effective way of benefiting their fellow-creatures than by giving them a sound education in the theology of the Church of England.'"[4]

At no time would the pretensions of the Church of England to control popular education have been tolerated by Dissenting or Secularist Liberals. Least of all could they be tolerated at a time when the most active and influential section of the Church's members were working, without disguise, to remodel her doctrines on Roman Catholic lines,

[1] *Op. cit.*, pp. 24–25.
[2] *Ibid*, p. 25 (quoting Mundella).
[3] *Ibid*, p. 24.
[4] *Ibid*, pp. 35–37.

exalting the pretensions of the priesthood, introducing the practice of private confession, and exhibiting sacramentalism as the very essence of religion. Their efforts were connected by an unbroken continuity of teaching with the Tractarian and Puseyite movement, on which they had made no essential advance. But they had given it a new and telling advertisement by appearing at the altar in garments of wonderful cut and colour, known as vestments, supposed to have the sanction of ancient ecclesiastical practice, but of very doubtful legality or good taste when donned by ministers of the reformed Anglican communion, and flaunted before congregations assembled to worship in the manner prescribed by the rubrics of the reformed Anglican Establishment. Some of these Ritualists, as they were called, openly advocated reunion with Rome; others went over to her communion; all were, not without reason, popularly regarded as the most efficacious propagandists of her faith. Now, it so happened that, at the very time when the Education Bill was under discussion, an Ecumenical Council, assembled for the purpose, was preparing to sanction by its decrees the Pope's claim to infallibility in questions of faith and morals—a claim which, as understood at the time, would give dogmatic authority to a protest against religious toleration recently issued by the reigning Pontiff, Pius IX.

But for the personal preferences of Gladstone and Forster, a much more satisfactory settlement of the education question might well have been carried in the most Liberal House of Commons the nineteenth century was destined to see; and

had it been rejected by the Lords—which seemed unlikely—an appeal to the constituencies would have sent the same majority back in triumph to Westminster. Parliament showed its true temper plainly enough, not only by the disestablishment of the Irish Church, but also, and even more, by an Act enabling atheists to give evidence on their affirmation in courts of law, passed the same year, and by the abolition of religious tests at Oxford and Cambridge, passed in 1871. It had been asserted with confidence not many years before that English parents wished university education to remain exclusively in the hands of the clergy. Experience has shown that they are perfectly willing to entrust both their sons and daughters to lay tuition. And their supposed prejudice against secular elementary education is, to all appearances, an equally baseless assumption.

While the Gladstonian Government were alienating the most advanced section of their majority within and without Parliament, both the Government and the majority of the House of Commons were making enemies of the working men, to whom they owed their very existence. "At the beginning of 1869 Mr. Frederic Harrison had drafted a comprehensive Bill embodying all the legislative proposals of his minority report. This was introduced by Messrs. Hughes and Mundella; and, although its provisions were received with denunciations by the employers, it gained some support among the newly-elected members, and was strongly backed outside the House. The Liberal Government of that day and nearly all the members of the House

of Commons were still covertly hostile to the principle of Trade Unionism, and every attempt was made to burke the measure. But the Junta [a little band of leading Trade Union officials who acted as a Cabinet for the whole movement] were determined to make felt their new political power. From every part of the country pressure was put upon members of Parliament. A great demonstration of workmen was held at Exeter Hall, at which Messrs. Mundella and Hughes declared their intention of forcing the House and the Ministry to vote upon the hated measure. Finding evasion no longer possible, the Government abandoned its attitude of hostility, and agreed to a formal second reading upon the understanding that the Cabinet would next year bring in a Bill of its own. A provisional measure, giving temporary protection to Trade Union funds, was accordingly hurried through Parliament at the end of the session, pending the introduction of a complete Bill."[1]

Two years passed before the appearance of the promised Bill, and then it proved highly unsatisfactory. Complete legal recognition was, indeed, granted to the Unions; but their means of action were seriously hampered. A series of judicial decisions, by which even peaceful picketing was made a crime, were re-enacted in a codified form, thus becoming "more uniformly effectual."[2] As a concession to the Unionists, this penalising provision was made into a separate Bill; but it passed as such, and an amendment introduced by the Lords made the prohibition of peaceful picketing

[1] Webb, *History of Trade Unionism*, pp. 258–59.
[2] *Op. cit.*, p. 263.

even more stringent, "watching and besetting by a single individual being made as criminal as watching and besetting" by a multitude.[1] Thus "almost any action taken by Trade Unionists to induce a man not to accept employment at a struck shop resulted, under the new Act, in imprisonment with hard labour."[2] Yet "Mr. Gladstone refused, in 1872, to admit that there was any necessity for further legislation, and utterly declined to take the matter up; and during that session" no member could be found "willing to introduce a Bill for the repeal of" the obnoxious law.[3]

In order to understand the reactionary attitude of even Liberal politicians towards the claims of working men we must once more turn our attention to Continental affairs.

Bismarck's high-handed intervention in Schleswig-Holstein, related in a former chapter, was merely a first step towards the unification of Germany under Prussian leadership. His next step was the expulsion of Austria from the German Confederation. To secure the neutrality of France, illusory promises of territorial aggrandisement were dangled before the eyes of her Emperor, whose faculties, never very considerable, had for some time past been undermined by disease and fatigue. Italy gave her alliance in exchange for the prospective cession of Venetia, which, with Rome, was alone wanting to complete her independence and unity. A campaign of a few days in Bohemia (June–July, 1866) laid the Hapsburg

[1] Webb, *History of Trade Unionism*, p. 266. [2] P. 268.
[3] Pp. 269–70.

dispatched, as is believed, against the Emperor's will, arrested him on the field of Mentana. De Failly, the French commander, an incompetent Court favourite, discredited his piteous victory by adding to its announcement a phrase destined to everlasting infamy: "The chassepots have done wonders." By a second blunder this was published in the *Moniteur*, evidently as a petty defiance to Prussia, for the chassepot was a newly-invented breechloader with which the French army was being rapidly supplied in view of a future war for the conquest of the Rhine frontier.

As the power and prestige of the Empire declined the strength and confidence of its domestic enemies increased. In the Press, in the Legislature, even in the law courts, the attacks of the Liberal Opposition on the Government grew more frequent and fearless, its home and foreign policy equally giving occasion for damaging criticism, sometimes conveyed in a style of high literary finish. At length, in 1869, the elections to the Corps Legislatif, although they still left the Bonapartists in a great majority, showed a gain of so many seats by the united sections of Liberal opinion as to permit no doubt that, in the absence of official pressure on the electors, their verdict would have been cast for constitutional freedom, as under Louis Philippe—a result which may perhaps be partly credited to the parallel democratic movement across the Channel. Personally, the Emperor rather welcomed such a change, tending, as it did, to lighten the overwhelming burden of his responsibilities, and a Liberal Cabinet was installed in power with his full acquiescence. Many, however, among his

old supporters looked on the new departure with alarm, and set their hopes on a successful war with Prussia, leading to a substantial increase of French territory, as the only chance of preserving the dynasty when Napoleon, whose health was rapidly failing, should be gone.

In these circumstances Bismarck adopted a course which has been severely censured for its apparent unscrupulousness, but for which something may be said even on grounds of the highest political morality. Seeing that the dominant party in France—and, indeed, any party likely to take its place should there be a revolution—might be expected to make war, whenever it suited their convenience, for the disruption and spoliation of Germany, he determined to promote a conflict between the two countries at a time when Germany still stood far better prepared for it than her hereditary enemy. For this purpose, early in 1870 he secretly put forward a young Prince of the Hohenzollern family as a candidate for the Spanish throne, which had remained vacant ever since the overthrow of the Bourbon dynasty by a military revolution in September, 1868. Prim, the author of the revolution, and still practically dictator of Spain, accepted the German nominee, and would have imposed his choice on the Cortes had not the rulers of France, in complete accordance with Bismarck's previsions, intervened to forbid the Hohenzollern candidature immediately on its promulgation in July. Had the direct annexation of Spain to Prussia been contemplated, the language of the Emperor's representatives could not have been more violent. In point of fact, there neither

was nor could be any foundation for the affected alarm, the alliances of modern States not being determined by the family connections of their sovereigns; and Spain, of all European States, having the least motive for allying herself with a Protestant Power against Catholic France. The real grievance, if any, seems to have been that Spain, under a Liberal Government, would not have lent herself to the designs of the clerical party at the Tuileries. If we may trust a report current at the time, their plan was to replace the French expeditionary corps that had won Mentana by an equal number of Spanish troops, thus setting their own soldiers free for service on the Rhine in case of war. In this way the disagreeable alternative between abandoning Pius IX. or driving Italy into a second Prussian alliance would have been evaded. At any rate, on no imaginable contingency could it matter to France what became of the Spanish throne, unless some service was expected from its occupant in the event of a war to be fought at the imperial convenience for the disunion and dismemberment of Germany. And Germany's great leader had a perfect right to offer a challenge that none but an adversary bent on quarrelling would have taken up.

As it happened, the adversary found himself forced to fight on grounds that exhibited him much more completely in his true character of wanton aggressor and bully. In deference to public opinion, and at his father's desire, the Hohenzollern Prince withdrew his candidature. France scored a diplomatic victory; but the war party in the Emperor's councils continued to play Bismarck's

game. At their instance Benedetti, the French Ambassador to the Prussian Court, received instructions to demand a pledge from King William that the Prince's candidature should not be renewed on any future occasion. The King, who was at that time drinking the waters at Ems, refused to give any such pledge, refusing also, when his answer had been given, to hold any further communications on the subject with Benedetti during the short remainder of his stay at Ems. An account of these proceedings was telegraphed to Bismarck, then at his country seat with the Prussian generals Moltke and Roon as his guests. All three felt much disappointed at the pacific turn events seemed to be taking. According to his own account, Bismarck, by skilful compression, gave the King's message a rather more peremptory appearance than it really possessed, making it look as if William I. had altogether declined to discuss the question of future guarantees in a personal interview with the French Ambassador, which was not true. With the high approval of the two generals Bismarck then telegraphed his amended version of the Ems affair all over Europe. Whether by this bold stroke he really decided the question between peace and war may well be doubted, for the refusal of the last French demands would in any case have been far more effectual than a mere neglect of diplomatic forms in showing that the limits of concession had been reached—especially as the slightest inquiry would have shown that no breach of courtesy had, in fact, been committed; nor does it appear that the Empress Eugénie, who openly spoke of the war as her

work, needed any such trifling occasion to fix a purpose of which dynastic considerations were the sole determining motive.

Bismarck's skilful diplomacy had simply forced the French Empire to appear as what it really was, the aggressor. But for its desire to prevent the completion of German unity and to seize the Rhine provinces there would have been no war. And when the declaration of war came from Paris, the Prussian Minister excited still further prejudice against Napoleon III. by publishing the draft project of a treaty confidentially submitted to him in 1866 for the forcible annexation of Belgium to France, with a guarantee of Prussia's armed support against any Power opposing itself to this act of spoliation. The draft was in the handwriting of the Duc de Gramont, at that time French Ambassador at Berlin; and its genuineness, although long denied, is now admitted on all sides. Even in 1870 the Orleanist *Revue des Deux Mondes* saw nothing objectionable or surprising about the proposal, except that it should have been betrayed by Bismarck.

England, as the Power most interested in Belgian independence, was evidently the Power threatened with war by her imperial ally in the draft treaty, and her Government now hastened to guard against the danger by contracting a treaty with the two belligerents respectively, providing that, "if the armies of either violated the neutrality of Belgium, Great Britain should co-operate with the armies of the other for its defence."[1] Both

[1] Walpole, *History of Twenty-five Years*, vol. ii., p. 505.

Continental Powers eventually agreed to the treaty; but the delay of the French Government in accepting it, as compared with the alacrity of the Germans, suggested that their predatory designs were not yet entirely abandoned. In the opinion of John Stuart Mill, England might have prevented the whole war by threatening to fight the party, whichever it might be, that began hostilities—and in this he was almost certainly right; but the actual state of public morality would hardly have enabled the most popular Government to risk the responsibility of following his chivalrous suggestion.

Within a few weeks from the beginning of hostilities the whole fabric of French Imperialism, so adulated by the higher classes in England, had collapsed. Its legions had laid down their arms to the invader; the Emperor was a prisoner; the Empress and her son, to secure whose succession she had wrought such evils, were fugitives; the temporal power of the Pope had ceased to exist; Paris was surrounded by German armies; and the far-sighted patriots who had vainly protested against making war on such a frivolous pretext as the Ems telegram were vainly struggling under the name of a French Republic to save their country from the dismemberment entailed on it by twenty years of corruption and folly.

The first effect of this catastrophe on European politics was to allow the unification of Italy and of Germany to be completed. The next was to undo one of the results of the Crimean War. As a guarantee for Turkish independence, it had been provided in the Treaty of Paris that Russia should

only be allowed to keep a certain very limited number of warships in the Black Sea, and that the construction or maintenance of arsenals on its shores should be forbidden. The Czar now took advantage of France's prostration to give notice that he no longer considered himself bound by these humiliating restraints on his sovereign rights. In deference to English susceptibilities, it was arranged that a European Conference should be assembled to grant Russia a release from her treaty obligations—a ceremony that she would certainly have dispensed with had the release been refused. What was really the most important consequence of the Crimean War could not be undone by any Czar or any Conference. It stood plain to the eyes of all men in the shape of a united and victorious Germany, constituting a far more effective barrier to Russian ambition than any Black Sea Treaty. Still, the whole transaction proved highly injurious to the prestige of the Gladstone Government; and this impression was still further aggravated not long afterwards by the sentence of a Court of Arbitration condemning England to pay heavy damages for the loss inflicted on American shipping through the depredations of the *Alabama* and her consorts.

Meanwhile, the surrender of Paris brought the war to an end, and France accepted terms dictated by the conqueror. A National Assembly, elected by universal suffrage, succeeded the Government of National Defence imposed on the French people by the mob of Paris. But this Assembly, while it represented the desire of the country for peace, represented it in nothing else. A majority of the

members were Monarchists; and, had it not been for their internal dissensions, a Bourbon Prince utterly out of sympathy with the ideas of modern France would have been placed on the vacant throne. The Parisian working men, already half-maddened by the privations of the siege, still retained the arms and the military organisation given them to be used against the invader. In a frenzy of rage, suspicion, baffled hopes, and Utopian dreams, they refused to obey the newly-constituted Government, drove its agents out of Paris, established a municipal reign of terror, and held the city against the armies of their own countrymen, under the eyes of a German garrison, until the tragedy closed seven weeks later in a carnival of blood and fire.

In France the Paris Commune—to give this abortive attempt at secularist municipalisation its historic name—nearly destroyed the new Republic. In England it not only revived the disdainful old commonplace that the French were unfit for a free government, but it also went far to counteract the democratic current set up by the Northern victory in the American War; and this reaction told especially against Trade Unionism, with which the Commune was, rightly or wrongly, supposed to be in some way connected. A society called the "International Association of Working Men," having for its object to establish a system of mutual support and co-operation among the working men of different countries, came in for a most unwarranted amount of suspicion and abuse on this occasion; and an idea gained ground, recalling upper-class opinion at the time

after filling various great offices of State with marked success, undertook the War Office in 1868. Next year his reforms began. He strengthened the home army by withdrawing a considerable number of regiments from the Colonies for service in the British Islands, while at the same time he brought the regular troops into organic connection with the Militia and the Volunteers. In 1870 he made some approach to the German system of short service. Under his predecessors the term of enlistment, originally for life, had been lowered first to twenty-one years, and then to twelve. Cardwell maintained this limit, but divided the term into two periods of six years each, the first to be spent with the colours and the second with the Reserves—an arrangement permitting the soldier's return in early life to some civil occupation. Those who enlisted in regiments destined for home service only might be passed into the Reserves after three years with the colours. It was hoped that in consequence of this change more recruits, and recruits of a better class, would be engaged. In the same year the army was for the first time placed entirely under the control of a responsible Parliamentary head, the Commander-in-Chief being definitely subordinated to the War Office.

In 1871, under the heightened stimulus of Continental example, Cardwell took a further step towards creating an efficient army—the most conspicuous and difficult, if not the most important, of all. He substituted promotion by seniority and merit for promotion by seniority and purchase. This reform is an instance of the beneficent influence exercised by Indian experience on

English administration. It had been first brought into the sphere of practical politics by Sir Charles Trevelyan, a veteran Anglo-Indian official, who also had a great share in opening the Civil Service to candidates chosen by competitive examination; and his son, the present Sir George Trevelyan, became an enthusiastic advocate of the same cause on entering Parliament in 1865, after a residence of six months in India.

Cardwell's scheme for the abolition of army purchase proved an expensive measure, as the existing officers had to be compensated not only for the legal, but also for the illegal, prices they had paid for their commissions. Now, although England is the richest country in Europe, if the continuance of an abuse saves public money, even at the risk of financially ruinous consequences at some future time, arguments against its abolition are always forthcoming; nor were they wanting on this occasion. Had the defenders of the purchase system on its merits been serious, they should have advocated its extension to the navy, the scientific army corps, and, indeed, to the whole public service.

On this as on other occasions the Lords made themselves the agents of plutocratic interests, and passed a wrecking amendment to Cardwell's Bill. Then, to the delight of their supporters in the Commons, the Government took advantage of the circumstance that army purchase had originally been created by Royal Warrant to abolish it by the same means, in defiance of privileged obstruction. Queen Victoria disliked promotion by merit, and did not like offending the Lords; but the habit

of obeying her Prime Minister and the pleasure of exercising her prerogative carried the day, and the barbarous custom of selling offices of trust was abolished by the equally barbarous instrumentality of a Royal Proclamation. Now, as after 1832, the extension of democracy brought with it a more unified authority, making for increased legislative and administrative efficiency.

Army reform was the last triumph of the Liberal Government. As already mentioned, they settled the *Alabama* question, but at the expense of paying an indemnity much in excess of what could be justly claimed for the depredations of the Birkenhead privateers. They passed a Ballot Bill, which, for some unexplained reason, seems to have benefited the Conservative more than the Liberal candidates. Their drink legislation made mortal enemies of the publicans, without doing much to check intemperance. Finally, in order to complete the pacification of Ireland, they proposed to establish a new Irish University without a Professor of Moral Philosophy, without a Professor of Modern History, and with a provision that such Professors as did exist should say nothing at which any of their pupils might think fit, on theological grounds, to take offence. A vote in favour of this grotesque proposal was described by one of the Liberal speakers as a vote of confidence in Cardinal Cullen and his priests. Unluckily for its authors, Cardinal Cullen had no confidence in the Bill. By his orders, or rather by the Pope's, the Irish Catholics voted against it on the second reading. Many Liberals joined in their defection, the whole

Conservative party threw its weight into the same scale, and the Bill was lost by a majority of three. Gladstone at once resigned, and the Queen sent for Disraeli, who, however, refused to take office, leaving his rival to drag out a few more months of discredited political existence.

In January, 1874, the Liberal leader dissolved Parliament on a promise to abolish the income-tax if he were returned to power. But income-taxpayers did not form a majority of the new electorate, and as a class they were more than satisfied with the amount of reform already secured, many even fearing that a new lease of Radicalism would leave them no income to be taxed. Dissenters and Secularists resented the re-endowment of Church schools. Tradè Unionist working men were actively hostile to a Government which, against their earnest remonstrances, had passed the Bill making peaceful picketing a crime. Their remedy was to run Labour candidates in opposition to Liberals and Conservatives alike, with the result that in most cases where a triangular contest took place the Conservative won the seat. Working men of an inferior sort resented the actual or threatened restrictions on their opportunities for getting drunk. Thus, although the Conservatives were in a minority on the total poll, they secured a majority of at least fifty in the House of Commons, and that, too, a majority of the most obedient sort; while a large number of the Irish Liberals had been returned as Home Rulers, and might be expected to vote with exclusive regard to obtaining autonomy for their island.

Gladstone resigned before the new Parliament

met, and Disraeli accepted an office which, for the first time in his life, gave him power as well as place. But his ignorance of the English temper remained complete, and the commanding position he now filled merely gave him an opportunity for exhibiting that ignorance more conspicuously than ever before.

Chapter XV.

THE REVOLT OF LITERATURE AND SCIENCE

A period of Conservative reaction in politics is often, if not always, marked by a forward movement in Liberal ideas. We saw how Pitt's reign of terror coincided with a great outburst of speculative activity, and how Peel's triumph was similarly illustrated by the forward-looking thought of early Victorian literature and philosophy. A second and even higher wave of progress follows under the aging Palmerston's retrograde rule, and comes to a pause with the political re-awakening of 1865. Then a more rapid movement of ebb and flow makes itself felt. The Irish Church Bill marks a climax in political Liberalism; the Education Bill and the refusal of fair play to the Trade Unions betray a slackening of fibre in its official representatives, a weak concession to religious and social prejudices. But this temporary halt or retreat is more than compensated by advances in another field.

Matthew Arnold, himself the son of a great Liberal divine, had pushed, at an early age, his father's innovating method to the acceptance of modern pantheism in its most outspoken form. Then, in a strangely obscurantist mood, he had attacked Bishop Colenso for postponing edification

to truth. Yet his last great poem, *Obermann Once More,* published in 1867, and presumably addressed to a popular audience, treats Christianity as an outworn illusion. The triumph of Dissent in 1868 irritated his refined susceptibilities; but this was chiefly because he looked on Dissenters as more illiberal and hardened dogmatists than Catholic Churchmen, whether Anglican or Roman. Religion was the best thing in the world; but, according to Arnold, it stood for enthusiastic morality. His work on *St. Paul and Protestantism* (1870) has for its object to show that this was, in effect, what the great Apostle of the Gentiles meant, or, at any rate, that his essential teaching might be preserved without accepting the specific doctrines of orthodox Christianity, or even the doctrines of a personal God and a future life.

Although Arnold had begun as a rather supercilious critic of Dissent, he soon found himself practically fighting on the side of Dissent against the advocates of denominational religious teaching in the Board schools. His next work, *Literature and Dogma* (1873), is an impassioned plea for making the Bible the basis of moral instruction, but a Bible interpreted on principles like those already applied to St. Paul's Epistles—in other words, a Bible totally divested of supernaturalist implications. The objects of his ridicule are not now to be found among members of the Liberation Society, but on the Episcopal Bench; while his most eager readers are to be sought in the Secularist or Agnostic ranks. Finally, his apologetic treatise, *God and the Bible* (1875), is much more successful as a popular version of extreme

rationalistic views than as an attempt to associate new meanings with old beliefs.

Apart from their intrinsic literary merit, which is high, these works of Arnold's deserve to be studied as evidence of the new freedom granted to those who took the unpopular side in religious discussions. Dr. Lushington's decision that a clergyman might lawfully subject any part of the Bible to adverse criticism seems to have released not only the clergy, but the laity also, from those bonds which had hitherto operated in restraint of plain speaking about religion among a people who habitually talked of themselves as the freest in the world. Opinions of a more advanced kind had, indeed, been openly professed for the last twenty years by Holyoake, Bradlaugh, and others, on the platform and in the Press. But these men formed almost a separate world, with publishers and a public of their own, any attempt on their part to associate themselves with the general interests of the people being resented almost as an outrage by the respectables. Indeed, it told heavily against Mill at the Westminster election of 1868 that he had subscribed to the election expenses of Bradlaugh, at that time already a candidate for Northampton. It was a new thing that opinions indistinguishable on the negative side from Bradlaugh's should not only be professed by one of the foremost literary men of the age, but also that they should be first published as articles in the *Cornhill Magazine* and the *Contemporary Review*.

Matthew Arnold passed for being a candid friend of the Churches, and no doubt his mind was so constituted as to feel itself more in sympathy with

their most believing members than with their uncompromising assailants. But there was not room on the needle's point for more than one such graceful performer. Mr. Swinburne, the great rising poet of the day, after devoting some of the loveliest of his *Poems and Ballads* (1866) to the glorification of Greek Paganism at the expense of Christianity, now proceeded, in a volume of revolutionary hymns entitled *Songs Before Sunrise* (1871), to denounce the idea of God with hardly less vehemence than the French Emperor or the Catholic Church. James Thomson, the strong, sombre poet of English pessimism, in his *City of Dreadful Night,* first published in Bradlaugh's *National Reformer* (1874), proclaims as "good tidings of great joy" that there is no God, and that "this little life is all we must endure." Robert Browning, a theistic optimist, who had formerly looked to Christianity for a definite guarantee of immortality, now let it be known that he rejected revelation, contenting himself with the natural religion of Voltaire, Rousseau, Gibbon, and Byron.[1]

Another very distinct indication of the rising current is to be found in Edward Fitzgerald's *Rubaiyát of Omar Khayyám.* Although this poem first appeared in 1859, its great popularity among the cultivated classes dates only from the early

[1] I have put together all the evidence furnished by Browning's poems respecting his attitude towards supernatural religion in my *History of English Rationalism,* vol. ii., pp. 275–83. As the force of my citations has been questioned, I may here refer also to the poet's own categorical statement made in conversation with Robert Buchanan that he was not a Christian (*The Outcast,* p. 198), and to his friend Mrs. Sutherland Orr's equally categorical statement that Browning's faith did not extend to a belief in revealed religion (*Contemporary Review,* vol. lx., p. 880).

'seventies, when the spirit of the age had come into closer sympathy with the hostility to theological teaching expressed in its quatrains, and most of all in those quatrains where the translator's altering and interpolating hand is most clearly visible.

Prose fiction also, where it touches the horizons of life, now indicates a distinct change of outlook as compared with the early Victorian period. Not to mention the novelists who, like Charlotte Yonge, wrote with an avowedly dogmatic purpose, there is a distinct pietistic vein running through the stories of Bulwer Lytton, Dickens, Thackeray, Charlotte Brontë, Charles Reade, and Anthony Trollope. Somewhat later George Eliot, without being herself a believer, adopts a highly sympathetic attitude towards religion. It is therefore somewhat remarkable that, on returning to prose fiction, after a silence prolonged through the reforming era (1866–71), she should exhibit in *Middlemarch,* her most elaborate and splendid performance, a much warmer sympathy with science than with religion. In the novels of her successor, Mr. Thomas Hardy, whose literary career begins at this same time, the repudiation of any interest outside humanity has always been more conclusive, and latterly has been more outspoken. And the same may be said of Mr. George Meredith, whose fame first spread beyond a narrow circle of admirers in the early 'seventies.

Darwin, in his *Origin of Species,* had not expressly gone into the question of man's derivation; and, although there could be no serious doubt about the inclusion of our race under the general

law of evolution by natural selection, it remained open to those who dreaded the great discoverer's authority to contend that he had left the matter undecided. By publishing *The Descent of Man* in 1871, the master closed that door of escape, and definitely placed himself by the side of his German disciple Haeckel. Nor were the English Darwinians at any pains to conceal what they regarded as the inconsistency of the new theory with the old beliefs. While carefully repudiating philosophical materialism, they taught something no less hostile to the idea that the world had been created, or was governed, by a superhuman intelligence and will. In his Presidential Address to the British Association (1874) Professor Tyndall, speaking for the physicists, announces that "we claim and we shall wrest from theology the entire domain of cosmological theory." He "discerns in matter the promise and potency of all terrestrial life." At the same meeting Huxley explained that our so-called voluntary movements are simply processes in the mechanism of the nervous system, connected by an unbroken continuity with the great series of causes and effects composing the sum of existence.

Such a conclusion was already implicit in the law of universal causation which Mill, thirty years earlier, had made the very foundation of inductive logic. But Mill failed to grasp the implications of his own philosophy. Dying at Avignon in 1873, he left behind him three unpublished Essays on Religion, which appeared in the following year. One of these deals with theism. All the usual arguments of natural theology for the existence of a God are passed in review and rejected, with the

single exception of the argument from design, and that only retains a provisional value, subject to the verdict of science on the soundness of Darwin's evolutionary theory. Supposing the origin of species by natural selection, or any other natural law, to be confirmed, theism would be lost. In the absence of such confirmation, the argument from design is allowed to possess a certain value, but only to the extent of creating a presumption that organised beings are the work of an intelligent Being whose power is limited by external conditions. Mill seems to have known very little about the facts of organic evolution, and to have forgotten Hume's destructive criticism of teleology as a basis for theism. A young Darwinian biologist, G. J. Romanes, who had gone very thoroughly into the subject before Mill's book appeared, exposed the fallacy of the great logician in a most convincing way ; and, although himself reconverted to theism at a later period, he seems to have derived his faith from emotional rather than from scientific considerations.

Meanwhile another representative of the new generation who, had he lived, would probably have taken the highest place among England's scientific thinkers, Professor W. K. Clifford, pointed out, in a celebrated lecture on *Body and Mind* (1874), that the intimate connection between mental function and nervous structure suggests a necessary dependence of consciousness on certain material combinations. And a brain of such dimensions as to support the mind of God is not found to exist. Clifford himself was not a materialist, but an idealist; that is to say, he looked on

material phenomena as merely the way in which the minds that form the ultimate elements of existence impress themselves on one another. What distinguished him from the theologians was that, instead of starting with an infinite intelligence and will, he assumes, to begin with, an enormous number of monads, each possessing an infinitesimal share of sensibility and volition, out of which animal and human minds have been built up by a slow process of compounding and recompounding, the resulting units being broken up at death and never afterwards reconstituted.

While theologians were kept on the alert by attacks proceeding from men of the highest scientific reputation on the very foundation of their beliefs, their historical pretensions were challenged by a massive work on *Supernatural Religion* (1874), having for its object to show that the miraculous narratives of the New Testament are so late, so ill-attested, and so self-contradictory as not to merit belief. It was written by a retired Indian official, the late Mr. Walter Cassels, who, however, did not acknowledge himself as the author until many years later. Appearing without any adventitious authority, the book nevertheless at once riveted public attention, and, in spite of its high price, passed through several editions in a few years, successfully braving an elaborate attack from Dr. Lightfoot, the most learned of Anglican divines. As is usual in such literature, the method followed by the orthodox apologist was to fasten exclusively on minor slips and side issues, overlooking the main stress of the rationalist argument.

Criticism of a more ephemeral character, but distinguished in many instances by intellectual merits of a high order, abounded in the lighter literature of the period. Such an onslaught on the popular theology, so ably conducted and marked by such passionate hostility, had never been known before among the higher classes of English society, and has not since been repeated. We have to seek for the explanation of so remarkable a phenomenon in the circumstances of the time. To begin with, the leaders of religious opinion were themselves largely responsible for the quarrel. They had attacked the new scientific theory of evolution and its representatives, as they had formerly attacked the truths of geology, with ignorant misrepresentation and venomous persistence. Even well on in the 'seventies we have it on contemporary evidence that "the rank and file of the Anglican clergy were intensely obscurantist," and that the pulpits rang with declamations against modern science.[1]

Science was perhaps big enough to take care of herself; but her votaries wished knowledge to be diffused as well as increased—more especially as diffusion would make for further increase. They were all for popular education; and here the clergy offered a much more formidable resistance than that opposed to their views about man's place in nature. While still himself a clergyman, J. R. Green, the celebrated historian of the English people, declared that "the clergy knew that a thoroughly educated people, and that people without any uneducated class, would be the ruin of

[1] John Morley, *Struggle for National Education*, p. 61; *On Compromise*, p. 53.

their Establishment. And so they fight every point, but with them it is a fight for life." These words were written before the passing of the Education Act. Clerical influence made the new system far less efficient than it ought to have been by associating it with an increased endowment of denominational teaching. Meanwhile—so at least Green thought—"every day made it more impossible to conciliate the Church of Dogma with the Church of Science." He welcomes the Liberal defeat at the General Election of 1874 as likely to hasten on Disestablishment. State support to a Ritualist Church means "paying money to make England papist."[1]

Pari passu with the new sacerdotal movement, the Romanism which Green and many others looked on as its inevitable terminus was every year assuming a more ominous aspect. We have seen to what dangerous principles the acceptance of Papal infallibility was expected to pledge every consistent Catholic believer. And quite apart from doctrinal implications, the Papacy as a political institution did not commend itself to English Liberalism. Pius IX. actively and openly opposed the unification of Italy. He was universally believed to be counter-working the establishment of a Republic in France. And the formation of a powerful Catholic Opposition in the new German Parliament convinced such good judges as the founders of German unity that the Pope was its deadly enemy. Now, all three causes were supported by the Liberal party in England, to which

[1] *Letters of J. R. Green*, pp. 171-72, 292, 378.

English rationalists, almost without exception, belonged, so that every motive of interest and sympathy impelled them to make war on a system which could be most effectually destroyed by showing that its fundamental assumptions were untrue.

Disraeli had no sympathy with science, and rationalism he thoroughly detested. But, both as a Jew and a Tory, he also hated the Roman Church; and his most entertaining, if not his most brilliant novel, *Lothair* (1870), is directed against Rome's supposed machinations for alluring rich young men into her fold. As Prime Minister, a cardinal principle of his policy was, apparently, to avoid what he considered the mistakes of his predecessor. Now, the overthrow of the Irish Church was, in his opinion, the removal of an important bulwark against Rome. To check Romanising practices within the Anglican Church would have the contrary effect. Probably for this reason Disraeli, though personally not approving of it, gave his support and sympathy to one of the earliest measures of his Administration, the Public Worship Regulation Bill, describing it as a Bill "to put down Ritualism"—a phrase which sent back a large body of High Church support to his rival Gladstone.[1]

More success attended the Tory Government in such of their measures as were designed for the benefit of the working classes; but it must not be forgotten that these were the direct fruit of the

[1] T. E. Kebbel, in the *Dictionary of National Biography*, vol. xv., p. 112.

extended suffrage Toryism had so long resisted. As it was, the Trade Unions had some difficulty in holding the Tories to their electioneering pledges. A Commission appointed to consider their grievances only led to "a perfunctory investigation and an inconclusive report." Then, as the result of increased agitation, "the Home Secretary introduced a Bill for altering respectively the civil and criminal law. As amended in Committee by the efforts of A. J. Mundella and others, these measures resulted in Acts which completely satisfied the Trade Union demands. The Criminal Law Amendment Act was repealed." By another Act "definite and reasonable limits were set to the application of the law of conspiracy to trade disputes." A third Act transformed the relation between capitalist and labourer from that between master and servant to that of employer and employee, making them "two equal parties to a civil contract." "Imprisonment for breach of contract was abolished, peaceful picketing permitted, violence and intimidation dealt with as part of the general criminal Code."[1]

To Mundella, the Radical member for Sheffield, also belongs the credit of a new Factory Act, still further reducing the hours of labour for women and children, and indirectly for men, passed in 1874 by the Conservative Home Secretary. This, together with the Factories and Workshops Act of 1878—a measure for consolidating and simplifying the whole mass of legislation on the subject—has given occasion to the unwarrantable boast that the Conservatives are the best friends of the working man.

[1] Webb, *History of Trade Unionism*, pp. 274–75.

What this friendship really amounts to was shown by a remarkable incident in the Session of 1875, which also illustrates a discreditable habit observed among English politicians of yielding to violence what they will not yield to justice. Samuel Plimsoll, a Nonconformist philanthropist who first entered Parliament in 1868, and was re-elected in 1874, had for some years been devoting himself to schemes for protecting the sailors employed on board merchant ships against the murderous greed of the shipowners. He discovered that it was a common practice to send out unseaworthy vessels insured beyond the value of their cargo with a view to making a profitable speculation in the highly probable event of their going down with all hands on board. According to Plimsoll, rotten old craft were bought up by regular "ship-knackers" for this nefarious purpose. Aided in his campaign by large contributions from the Trade Unions, he introduced more than one Bill for the protection of the unfortunate sailors by a system of official inspection. On his failing to pass a measure for the purpose, popular agitation compelled the Conservative Government to take it up in 1875; but towards the close of the Session they withdrew their Bill. Plimsoll thereupon made a violent scene in the House, shaking his fist in the face of the Ministers, and calling the shipowning members, to whose hostility he attributed the defeat of his efforts, "you villains." Disraeli, with great tact and good temper, let down the exasperated enthusiast as gently as in the circumstances was possible. A temporary Act was at once passed, and something in the way of permanent legislation

was effected the year after, but only, as would seem, with the result that "the evils both of overloading and of unseaworthiness were aggravated by this well-meant attempt to check them."[1] It does not appear that the method of making owners penally responsible for the loss of life, if any, due to their calculated negligence has been tried.

To restore Army purchase outright was beyond the power of the Tory Government. But they brought back the principle in an underhand way by a Bill enabling poor officers who exchanged into regiments ordered to India to accept a sum of money from those whose places they took, and who were willing to hire substitutes—for that was what the arrangement really meant—that they might be relieved from the obligation of serving their country in that disagreeable manner.

Among the provisions of Forster's Education Act which gave offence to Nonconformists the Twenty-fifth Section, although not the most important, was the one particularly singled out for attack. It "enabled School Boards to pay the school-pence of the children of the indigent parents at whatever school, denominational or otherwise, the indigent parent might select."[2] In 1876 the obnoxious clause was repealed; but, as the new Act merely transferred the payment of school-pence from the School Board to the Guardians, the grievance of those who objected to being taxed for a religious education of which they did not approve remained the same, and was even aggravated

[1] *Social England*, vol. vi., p. 615.
[2] Morley, *Struggle for National Education*, p. 8.

by an increase of the Government subsidy to the denominational schools, amounting in most instances to an additional half-crown per child.[1] As a set-off against this reactionary policy, the Act of 1876 took a long step towards creating adequate machinery for obliging parents to provide for the education of their children.[2]

Perhaps the most beneficent work of the Conservative Government was the institution by their Chancellor of the Exchequer, Sir Stafford Northcote, of a Sinking Fund. In the Budget of 1875 a fixed charge of twenty-eight millions was assigned to the service of the National Debt. What remained of this sum after paying the interest was to be spent on the redemption of debt, and, as under the arrangement contemplated less would be paid as interest every year, the amount available for paying off capital would be increased to the same extent. Two conditions, however, were involved in the perfect working of the scheme. The first is that no new debt should be contracted, the second that the Sinking Fund should be kept inviolate; and neither of these has been invariably observed. Still, the actual effect of Northcote's scheme has been to reduce our liabilities considerably below the level at which they would otherwise have stood, placing us, so far, in a more hopeful position than is occupied in this respect by any other great European Power. And for this, as I have already noticed, we have to thank no practical statesman, Liberal or Conservative, but the far-sighted philosopher John Stuart Mill.

[1] Holman, *English National Education*, pp. 202–3.
[2] *Ibid*, pp. 201–2.

massacred by their old enemies the Druses, with the connivance and assistance of the Turkish officials and the Turkish garrison. One hundred and fifty villages were burned, six thousand Christians murdered, two thousand women sold into slavery. By orders from Constantinople the perpetrators of these horrors were allowed to get off with almost complete impunity.[1]

In 1863 Professor Goldwin Smith addressed a letter to the *Daily News* clearly setting forth the position of the Turks as a barbarous horde encamped on European soil, incapable of founding any permanent civilisation in the regions over which they held sway. A new Turkish loan was launched on the London market that year, and it would have been well for English investors had they laid to heart the prophetic warning of the philosophic historian.

Thanks to the blind greed of Western capitalism, the barbarian horde held its own for yet a while. In 1866 the Cretan Greeks rose against the Turks, and the insurrection was hailed by Mr. Swinburne in an ode half of triumph at the revival of liberty, half of sorrow at the supineness of Europe. But the Powers refused to interfere, and Lord Stanley, the English Foreign Secretary, gave orders that Greek fugitives were not to receive shelter on board English men-of-war.

At last the breaking-point was reached. The rising of the Bosnian Christians against their Mohammedan oppressors in 1875 so strained the

[1] De la Gorce, *Histoire du Second Empire,* vol. iii., pp. 314–44. My authority for the numbers given is Lavallée, *Histoire des Français,* continuée par Frédéric Lock, vol. vi., p. 174.

resources of the Turkish Government that after twenty years of ruinous extravagance, fed by the loans of credulous investors, it became bankrupt, reducing the interest on its five per cent. debt to one half, and soon failing to pay even that diminished amount.

Meanwhile Turkey's chief vassal, Ismail, the Khedive of Egypt, who had been running a similar career of extravagance, found himself in almost as desperate straits. His unfortunate serfs had been squeezed to the last piastre by a process of extortion unprecedented even in a record going back through at least five thousand years of monotonous oppression. Foreign capital, alarmed by the catastrophe at Constantinople, declined to take any further risk. One resource, however, still remained available. A great French engineer, overcoming the physical obstacles presented by the Isthmus of Suez, and the still more formidable resistance of Lord Palmerston, had at last succeeded in connecting the Mediterranean with the Red Sea by a ship canal. As the price of his assistance a number of shares in the enterprise were allotted to Ismail. It was understood that these must be sold to cover his immediate liabilities, and the French Government was spoken of as a likely purchaser. At this juncture Mr. Frederick Greenwood, editor of the *Pall Mall Gazette,* and at that time beyond dispute the ablest journalist in London, sought an audience of the Prime Minister, and appealed to him not to let the opportunity escape. Perhaps the idea of turning what Palmerston had thought a menace into a bulwark of England's power stirred Disraeli's imagination. At any rate, he agreed to pay four

million sterling for the shares. In the Cabinet this step was opposed by the two Ministers whose departments it most interested—Lord Stanley, the Foreign Secretary, and Sir Stafford Northcote, the Chancellor of the Exchequer; in the House of Commons the Liberal leaders unanimously condemned it. But the *Times* supported Disraeli, and the vocal section of public opinion acquiesced. Abroad people regarded buying the shares as equivalent to buying the Canal, and buying the Canal as equivalent to an English Protectorate over Egypt. As things then stood, the immediate military occupation of the Nile valley by English troops would probably not have called forth any effective protest, and would have prevented much bloodshed in the years to come. But the cohesion of a Cabinet unenterprising by the very law of its existence would not have resisted this further strain.

What made the insurrection in Bosnia and Herzegovina so dangerous to Turkey was that the scene of action lay just outside the door of a great Christian Power. Austria could not view with indifference a contest raging on her frontier and throwing crowds of refugees on her charity for support. Andrassy, the Austrian Chancellor, drew up a Note, to which all the great Powers adhered, pressing certain administrative reforms on the Porte. The Porte accepted them; but the insurgents, knowing what Turkish promises were worth, fought on. Then Carlyle's quasi-infernal roaring lion woke up. "On May 6th, 1876, the Prussian and French Consuls at Salonica were

attacked and murdered by the mob."[1] The Chancellors of the three Empires drew up a Memorandum threatening forcible intervention unless immediate steps were taken to put the promised reforms into execution. Of the other three Powers England alone refused her adhesion to the Memorandum. Immediately after this the Sultan Abdul Aziz was deposed and murdered in prison. His successor Murad, after a three months' reign, was also deposed and replaced by the present Sultan, Abdul Hamid, a ruler in whom the anti-human instincts of his race have embodied themselves with ideal perfection, unrelieved by any trace of the Ottoman's dauntless physical courage.

During that summer events came to light which opened the eyes of at least some Englishmen to the real character of the Power with whose doings their Government declined to interfere. In April the insurrectionary movement had spread from Herzegovina to Bulgaria. Here the Turks had a freer hand, and they applied their traditional methods of repression on a more comprehensive scale. Two correspondents of the *Daily News* first made known to Western Europe the story, since often repeated, of massacre and torture inflicted by Turkish irregular troops on Christian men, women, and children. There may have been some exaggeration about the first accounts. There generally is exaggeration on these occasions. The Sepoy mutineers did not commit all, or nearly all, the horrors ascribed to them by English journalists at the time. But we do not therefore reject as mythical the

[1] Fyffe, *History of Modern Europe,* vol. iii., p. 479.

narratives, written from ocular testimony, of what happened at Delhi and Cawnpore. And in this instance we have the official report of an English Secretary of Legation sent from Constantinople to collect evidence on the spot. It estimates the number of slaughtered Bulgarians at 12,000. At Batak "the villagers were summoned by Achmet Aga to give up their arms, and were solemnly assured by him that, if they did so, their lives would be spared. They obeyed, and gave him their money, too. Achmet promptly set the Bashi-Bazouks upon them, who slaughtered them like sheep. Twelve hundred who took refuge in a church were burnt alive. For this exploit Achmet received the order of the Medjidie."[1]

Disraeli, when first questioned about the massacres, spoke of the newspaper reports as "coffee-house babble." That babble was soon to be used as the instrument of his overthrow. Early in September Gladstone, accepting the correspondence of the *Daily News* as, on the whole, trustworthy, published a pamphlet entitled *Bulgarian Horrors and the Question of the East,* in which he demanded the expulsion of the Turkish executive officers "from the province they had desolated and profaned." Disraeli, who had been recently raised to the peerage under the title of Earl of Beaconsfield, replied by a protest against the politicians who made use of such incidents for party purposes, "comparing them unfavourably with the perpetrators of the Bulgarian massacres."[2]

[1] H. Paul, *Modern England,* vol. iv., p. 12.
[2] *Ibid,* p. 13.

Apparently, his idea was that our Indian Empire would not be safe unless the Turks continued to keep Russia out of Constantinople, and that a statesman who urged his countrymen to abandon Turkey was for that reason a traitor to England. It was possible to retort, as Freeman the historian actually did, that an empire which could be preserved only at the cost of condoning Turkish atrocities had better be abandoned. Lord Beaconsfield's admirers were evidently not prepared openly to repudiate the idea of applying morality to politics, for, whereas Freeman had said, "Perish our empire in India rather than justice," they studiously quoted him as having said, "Perish India!" and their misrepresentation had such success that Queen Victoria waited some weeks to confirm his appointment to the Professorship of Modern History at Oxford until she was able to satisfy herself about the truth of this report.

In point of fact, the preservation of our empire involved no such disgraceful complicity with the crimes of Achmet Aga. It is very doubtful whether, in any case, our communications with the Far East would be endangered by the presence of a Russian army at Constantinople. With the Suez Canal in our possession, the danger becomes exceedingly small. Nor was there at that time any serious question of a Russian advance to the Bosporus. Austria, whose interests were more concerned than ours to prevent it, would have blocked the way. Russia herself did not wish for war; nor, if Gladstone's demand of autonomy for Bulgaria had been conceded, would there have been any war. To secure this end no more was needed

than a peremptory representation from England. As it was, the Turks resisted because England made no such demand, and because, when Russia made it, they felt sure that their old ally would not leave them in the lurch.

For a moment it seemed as if the Christians of the Balkan Peninsula could recover their freedom unaided. Aspiring to play the part of a new Piedmont, Servia declared herself independent, and joined with Montenegro, which had always been independent, in making war on the Porte, thousands of Russian volunteers flocking to take part in the new crusade. Unfortunately the Servians were neither themselves a fighting race, nor were they led by a brave Prince; while the Turks, besides wielding far greater resources, showed that their old military capacity still survived in unbroken vigour. Montenegro did wonders; but a series of disasters laid Servia at the feet of her old conquerors before the summer of 1876 was over, to be saved only by Russia's imperative intercession.

Then followed six months of negotiation between the Porte and a reconstituted European Concert. The Powers were agreed in demanding a reformed administration for the Christian provinces of the Balkan Peninsula, with an armed executive Commission to enforce their decrees. All might have been peaceably arranged had not Beaconsfield, with his usual genius for plagiarism, set himself to repeat the part played by Palmerston in 1853–54, totally misconceiving the difference of circumstances, the aim, and the spirit that distinguished his model

from himself. Palmerston had struck at Russia as the enemy of European liberty no less than as the rival of England; Turkey had at least protected Kossuth; with the help of English capital she might be started on a new career of peaceful progress and unsectarian enlightenment; the English people were burning to avenge the wrongs of Hungary; best of all, Louis Napoleon was ready to sell the co-operation of his army and fleet for the cheap price of an introduction to good society. In 1876 not only had all this changed, but, as if to heighten the force of contrast, the political situation of 1859 naturally recurred to the memory of thoughtful people as an exact parallel and precedent for England's guidance in this new crisis of her fate. Then, also, Conservative alarmists had ridiculed the pretensions of a despot to come forward as the champion of a struggling nationality; they had recalled the policy of selfish aggrandisement invariably pursued by French conquerors beyond the Alps; they had recommended us to stand by Austria as the defender of European treaties and the old ally of England. Yet their predictions had all been falsified, and their preferences had contributed to Disraeli's own defeat in the General Election that took place during the Franco-Austrian War. That the cause of the Balkan populations had succeeded to the cause of Italy in the sympathies of English Liberalism had been made abundantly clear by a message of encouragement from the veteran Whig Lord Russell to the Herzegovinian insurgents, and by the enormous success of Gladstone's pamphlet on Bulgarian horrors, which was selling at the rate

of 10,000 copies a day. But, as we have seen, it was a guiding principle with the Tory chief to avoid what seemed to be the ruinous mistakes of his rival, and among those mistakes the most ruinous, in his opinion, was an insufficient assertion of England's power. He forgot that, since Elizabeth, England has only intervened with success and satisfaction to herself on the side of nations struggling to be free.

In a speech delivered at the Guildhall on November 9th, 1876, Beaconsfield declared that England was ready to fight three campaigns in a righteous cause—meaning, presumably, the cause of Abdul Hamid and Achmet Aga. After such a defiance the Czar could not draw back; after such an encouragement the Turk would not yield. A Conference held at Constantinople to press the demands of united Europe on the Porte failed to impress the wily barbarians, who knew, thanks to the English Premier's speech, what to think of its unity. On April 24th, 1877, Russia began what the *Spectator* described, with truth, as "the most just and necessary war of our time."

England had not the glory of making that war unnecessary by sending her fleet to bring the Sultan to reason. She narrowly escaped the infamy of aggravating it by sending her fleet to his support. "There is reason to believe that preparations were actually made, that commanders were chosen, and instructions were almost on their way, which would have committed the country beyond recall. Carlyle heard of this, not, as he said, from idle rumour, but from some authentic source," with the happy result that he wrote a short

letter to the *Times* denouncing, in veiled but significant terms, the scheme of "our miraculous Premier" to the world. What the Premier was actually planning has not yet transpired; but the fleet did not sail, and "this, perhaps," observes his biographer, "was the most useful act in Carlyle's whole life."[1]

Be her cause just or unjust, Russia's generals conduct the operations of war with the same invariable stupidity. On this occasion, as before in the Crimea and afterwards on a far greater scale in Manchuria, her armies suffered a series of discreditable defeats; and the same section of English society that had applauded Louis Napoleon, the Southern slave-holders, and Governor Eyre, now found fresh cause for congratulation in the performances of the victorious Pashas. At last a competent strategist, Todleben, the defender of Sebastopol, was placed in virtual command of the Czar's invading armies, and the Turkish defence collapsed at every point. On advancing to within striking distance of Constantinople the conquerors found themselves confronted by an English fleet. Again war seemed imminent, and again prudent counsels prevailed. Without entering the enemy's capital, Russia was in a position to dictate terms of peace. Her demands were, in the circumstances, not excessive. Originally undertaken for the deliverance of Bulgaria, the war was to have for its chief result the constitution of an autonomous Bulgarian Principality, with a population of four millions and a territory somewhat less

[1] Froude, *Life of Carlyle*, vol. iv., pp. 441-42.

than Roumania and Servia put together. Any increase in the number of people released from Turkish administration represented a pure gain to humanity; and the larger the country they occupied, the better chance would they have of maintaining their independence against Russia.

Such, however, was not the opinion of the English Ministry, who looked on the proposed principality as Russia's predestined ally in any future advance on Constantinople, just as Roumania had been her ally in the recent campaign. Their protest took the form of a demand that the Treaty of San Stefano, as it was called, should be subjected to the revision of a European Congress. Russia, who had performed single-handed the office Europe had declined, naturally objected to having her work pulled to pieces by those who looked on while she fought. For the third time war came in sight—on this occasion, however, with the likelihood that Austria would be our ally. Two Ministers, Derby and Carnarvon, representing the peace party in the Cabinet, resigned; a credit of six millions was voted, the Reserves were called out, and 7,000 Sepoys were brought from India to Malta—a trumpery reinforcement, of whose ability to face European troops some authorities expressed their doubts.

On June 3rd, 1878, the new Foreign Secretary, Lord Salisbury, announced that Russia—alarmed, as was left to be supposed, by our more or less imposing display of power—had consented to lay the Treaty of San Stefano before a European Congress. Unfortunately, the day after the Congress met at Berlin it transpired that the

labours of that august assembly had been forestalled by a private arrangement made between Lord Salisbury himself and Count Schouvaloff, the Russian Ambassador in London. An outsider employed by the Foreign Office to copy the secret treaty had made a private copy for himself, and had sold it to the *Globe* newspaper, which published the text *in extenso* on the evening of June 14th.

England alone had made the subjection of the Treaty of San Stefano to a European Congress a question of peace or war. It now appeared that she was ready to back up every demand of Russia except one. Instead of a big Bulgaria, there was to be a little one, with a territory two-fifths of the size originally determined, and a population reduced from four to one and a-half millions. Another fifth, with a population of nearly a million, was to be formed into a province called Eastern Roumelia, to be placed more directly under Turkish sovereignty, but with guarantees against its worst abuses. The remaining two-fifths reverted to the chances of alternate oppression and anarchy. As a fee for her good offices England was to occupy Cyprus, paying tribute for it to the Porte.

Beaconsfield and Salisbury represented England in the rather farcical gathering of diplomatists who met at Berlin to register the articles of the secret treaty. Such was the dread and hatred of Russia entertained at that time by the German people, and such the influence of Hebrew journalists on public opinion, that the not very great concessions extorted from Prince Gortchakoff by Beaconsfield made our Prime Minister the idol of all classes in Germany, even

the historian Mommsen ranking him with Pitt.[1] Received on his return to London by a cheering multitude, the great master of hollow phraseology favoured them with his most felicitous creation: "We bring you back peace with honour." Peace had not been endangered by anyone but himself; and the honour was rather for his personality than for his adopted country.

Palmerston's first challenge to Russia in Europe had been met by a counter-mine at Cabul, exploding in disastrous war. His imitator was now to experience the consequences of the same policy in much the same way.

In January, 1876, Disraeli sent out Lord Lytton, son of Bulwer-Lytton, the novelist and statesman, as Viceroy to India. With the temperament but without the genius of a poet, the new ruler had hitherto been known, or rather notorious, for the extent and audacity of his literary plagiarisms. As a practical statesman he habitually set himself above precedent and advice, sometimes with good, sometimes with evil consequences. Because the liberty of the Press has been defended on grounds of abstract right, he failed to see that it may be defended with better reason on grounds of practical expediency, summarily disposing of it as "a fetish" —a nickname which his party are now using as an excellent substitute for argument in their campaign against Free Trade. His own fetish was State interference. But the methods of benevolent despotism are better fitted to cope with famine

[1] Mommsen, *Römische Geschichte*, Bd. v., p. 264.

than with discontent; and if Lord Lytton gagged the Hindoo Press, he fed the Hindoo people. Beyond the Indian frontier his policy of not letting things alone proved fruitful of mischief. His tactless efforts to bring Shere Ali, the Ameer of Afghanistan, permanently within the sphere of British influence, merely drove that half-insane potentate to seek protection from the ever-advancing power of Russia. An opportunity soon occurred for making himself agreeable to his Northern neighbour, with the advantage, at the same time, of reading a lesson to the meddlesome Viceroy. Beaconsfield's threat to draw on India for reinforcements naturally suggested to the Czar's advisers a scheme for giving the Indian Army employment nearer home. While the issues of peace and war were still pending in the West, a Russian envoy left for Cabul—probably to negotiate an alliance with Afghanistan. He arrived after the Congress had done its work, and withdrew after a short visit, his continued stay not being thought desirable by the suspicious Afghans. Lytton had previously broken off all relations with Shere Ali; but it seemed intolerable that a Russian envoy should be received where admission had been denied to the representatives of the Empress of India. Accordingly, without the Ameer's consent and against his known wishes, a British Mission, accompanied by an escort of 200 armed men, was dispatched to Cabul, but was stopped immediately after crossing the frontier by an Afghan official, and forbidden to advance any further until instructions had been received from the Ameer. The Afghans, as an independent people, were clearly within their rights

in acting as they did; but the Indian Government, like the French Government in 1870, wanted to pick a quarrel for the purpose of securing what was called a scientific frontier by annexing a piece of Afghan territory. The pretended insult to our Embassy furnished a welcome pretext for an iniquitous war of conquest.

Shere Ali fled before the invaders, and died soon afterwards in exile. His son, Yacoub, accepted a treaty ceding the scientific frontier, and agreeing to the establishment of a British Resident at Cabul. Sir Louis Cavagnari, the officer chosen to occupy that perilous position, entered on his duties on July 24th, 1878. Six weeks afterwards he and the whole Mission were massacred by the Afghans, with the connivance, as is believed, of Yacoub. This catastrophe necessitated a second war, leading to the temporary dismemberment of the country, the southern division, Candahar, being retained in our possession. Still the tribesmen fought on, and even inflicted on us at Maiwand (July 27th, 1880) the most signal defeat ever suffered by a British army at the hands of Asiatics. Our military position was retrieved by the brilliant strategy of General Roberts, whose decisive victory at Candahar brought the war to an end. By this time a Liberal Ministry had succeeded to office; the just demands of the Afghans were conceded; Candahar was reunited to Afghanistan; and the new Ameer, Abdurrahman, entered into friendly relations with the Indian Government, which abandoned the unlucky attempt to force a British Resident on the Afghan ruler when a native envoy answered the same purpose much better. Meanwhile, India had

to pay £17,000,000 for an unjust and unnecessary war.

Among the few territorial gains assigned to England by the Congress of Vienna, the Cape of Good Hope was one. It had been taken from the Dutch at a time when their country was a vassal of the French Empire; and, being a station on the ocean route to India, it seemed too valuable a possession to part with when Holland regained her independence on the restoration of peace. But the old colonists, known as Boers, who were mostly Dutch or French, did not take kindly to British rule. After a time great numbers of them migrated across the Orange and Vaal Rivers, founding new settlements whose independence the Cape Government recognised in 1853 and 1854 under the names of the Orange Free State and the Transvaal Republic. Meanwhile the native Africans, a robust and high-spirited race, by the multiplication of their numbers effectually prevented the white colonisation of the country on such a scale as obtained in America and Australia. Their frequent revolts involved us in expensive wars, and at the same time kept alive the military spirit of the Boers.

In 1877 the Transvaal Republic had become nearly bankrupt, and was reported to be in danger of invasion by the Zulus, who, under the administration of their king, Cetywayo, had developed a formidable military power. At the suggestion of some settlers, who probably expected to make their fortunes under a more efficient government, the Transvaal was annexed by proclamation to the

British Crown without the consent, and against the wish, of the Boer population. Had our agent, Sir Theophilus Shepstone, who was personally responsible for the annexation, been content to wait a little longer, the same result might have been amicably obtained.

At that time it was a favourite scheme with English statesmen to unite the whole of South Africa into a single Confederation, somewhat after the style of the Dominion of Canada. In furtherance of this scheme Lord Carnarvon, the Conservative Colonial Secretary, sent out Sir Bartle Frere, an Anglo-Indian official of high character and ability, as Governor of Cape Colony and High Commissioner for the settlement of native affairs. Cetywayo, who had been deeply offended at seeing the Transvaal rescued from his grasp, proved a formidable obstacle in Frere's path. An ultimatum practically demanding the break-up of his army and the surrender of his independence was sent to the Zulu King. On the expiration of the time allowed for an answer, the High Commissioner declared war, without the authorisation of the Home Government and contrary to their instructions. The force at his disposal seems to have been insufficient for its destination, besides being led by one of our incompetent titled generals, Lord Chelmsford. Owing to his bad management, a force of 1,774 British soldiers and 650 natives was surprised and defeated by 20,000 Zulus, with the loss of half its numbers.

Had the policy of Sir Bartle Frere proved immediately successful, his disobedience would probably have been condoned and rewarded. When the

news of the disaster, for which he was not responsible, reached England the Beaconsfield Government censured, but did not recall him. At this distance of time we can see that their violations of justice and expediency were far more flagrant in the case of Bulgaria and Afghanistan than in the case of South Africa. Yet in both instances they received the support of many Liberal members, whereas the whole Liberal Opposition united in a vote of censure on their lenient treatment of the man who, on his own responsibility, had involved us in an unprovoked and unlucky war. Their party majority saved them from defeat; but it was understood that the Liberals had public opinion at their back.

After a six months' campaign, Lord Chelmsford succeeded in decisively defeating his barbarian opponents. Before their final overthrow they had unconsciously rendered a service to French as well as to English Liberalism. The Prince Imperial, as the fallen French Emperor's heir was entitled, had gone out to the Cape as a volunteer in order to acquire some of that military reputation which is the obligatory stock-in-trade of a Bonapartist pretender. He fell into a Zulu ambush, and, by his death, relieved France from the fear of an Imperialist restoration. His sword had not made women childless; but the sentence of the Hebrew prophet seemed to be carried out with terrible appropriateness on her who had forced on the Franco-German War that her son's succession to a tottering throne might be secured.

A period of commercial and agricultural distress

at home came to reinforce the effect of disaster and discredit abroad. In Ireland the bad harvest of 1879 led to the association of an agrarian agitation for reduced rents—or, in some instances, for no rent—with the chronic political agitation for Home Rule. In Great Britain the influence of political journalism, once so powerful, on public opinion now gave place utterly to the influence of platform oratory, not merely on the audience who heard it delivered, but on the far greater multitude who read reports of it in the daily Press. Two speakers, in particular, made an unprecedented impression—Sir William Harcourt on the educated classes, by coruscations of wit and epigram recalling Disraeli in his best days, Gladstone on the many, by an impassioned eloquence beside which Bright's more carefully studied and classic periods seemed cold and tame.

So insecure did the Conservative leaders feel their position to be that they seemed to contemplate the advisability of letting Parliament sit out the legal term of its existence. Then something that looked very like a gigantic job in connection with a Bill for buying out the London Water Companies raised an outcry before which they found it expedient to retreat by means of an appeal to the country (March, 1880).

"We always knew," said Gladstone, with unwonted pleasantry, "that water would dissolve salt, but not that it would dissolve a Parliament." In this instance it dissolved a Government and a whole political system as well. At the General Election of 1880 the Conservatives lost 112 seats. As against Liberals and Home Rulers combined, they were in

a minority of 173; as against the Liberals alone, they were in a minority of 107. If the Home Rulers—of whom there were 61—should combine with the Conservatives, the Liberals would still be in a majority of 46.

The dominant party owed its victory, not only to popular enthusiasm, but also to a new system of electoral organisation known, by the misapplication of an American political term, as the Caucus. Candidates for the Parliamentary representation of the constituencies, when they were not the nominees of a local magnate, used, in many instances, to be supplied by the London clubs or similar centralised agencies. The object of those who instituted the Caucus was to hand over this office to a permanent local association chosen by the electors themselves. Each member of the association was elected by a group of electors, constituting what is called a primary, recognised as permanently belonging to the same party, and periodically convoked to choose a representative, just like the larger body of which they formed a subsection. Where this arrangement worked normally, it operated as a healthy development of the representative system, giving the electors a sustained interest in current political questions, and bringing members of Parliament into closer political touch with the opinions and sentiments of those to whom they owed their place in the great Council of the nation.

This excellent system, which has since been adopted by the Conservatives also, was introduced by Mr. Joseph Chamberlain, the member for Birmingham, at that time leader of the advanced Radicals, a strong opponent of State-aided

denominational education, and a strong supporter of Gladstone's Eastern policy. His opinions were supposed to be largely inspired by Sir Charles Dilke and Mr. John Morley, with whom he acted in close alliance. In extent and accuracy of knowledge both were immensely Mr. Chamberlain's superiors; but neither of them could compare with him as an orator or a practical statesman. Many looked on him as Gladstone's destined successor in the leadership of the Liberal party. Meanwhile, his services as the organiser of victory were recognised on the formation of a new Ministry by the bestowal on him of Cabinet rank in the Administration formed by Gladstone when the General Election drove Beaconsfield from power.

Chapter XVII.

THE LAST PALADINS

It is remarkable that Gladstone's second Ministry included a number of statesmen who had opposed, as not being Liberal enough, his education policy of 1870 and 1873. Mr. Chamberlain, as I have said, obtained a seat in the Cabinet; and if Fawcett, Mundella, Sir Charles Dilke, and Mr. G. O. Trevelyan occupied less prominent positions, it was felt that they represented the future, and that the leanings of the Government, as a whole, would be largely determined by their opinions.

It soon appeared, however, that the religious liberality of the Ministerial majority hardly equalled the promise of the Front Bench. Among the newly-elected Radical members, one of the most remarkable was Charles Bradlaugh. We have already come across him as a leader in the Secularist movement. Being a powerful public speaker and interested in other things besides rationalistic criticism, he had contested Northampton in 1868, but was defeated by a large majority. In 1880 he had better success, polling 675 more than the higher of the two Conservative candidates, the leading local brewer.

When Parliament met, on May 3rd, Bradlaugh presented himself at the table of the House of Commons and claimed leave to be admitted on his affirmation, instead of taking the usual oath, under

an Act passed for the relief of non-theistic witnesses in courts of justice. The point was referred to a Select Committee, which decided, by the casting vote of its chairman, that the claim was invalid. Bradlaugh then expressed his readiness to take the oath, and had already presented himself for the purpose when Sir Henry Drummond Wolff protested against his being permitted to do so. Such an intervention, as afterwards appeared, was illegal, and ought not to have been sanctioned by the Speaker, who, however, was on this occasion weak enough to permit it. The Prime Minister then carried a Resolution for the appointment of a fresh Committee to consider the question of Bradlaugh's competence to be sworn. As a result of questions put to him about his religious opinions, but in express contradiction to his own declarations on the subject, the Committee decided that an oath would not bind his conscience, and for that reason refused him permission to take it. His colleague in the representation of Northampton, Mr. Labouchere, then moved that Bradlaugh should be permitted to affirm. The House refused permission by 275 to 230, thirty-six Liberals and thirty-one Home Rulers voting in the majority. In the course of the debate John Bright declared that, "to a large extent, the working people of this country do not care any more for the dogmas of Christianity than the upper classes care for the practice of that religion."[1]

Again Bradlaugh claimed to be sworn, and this time, on his refusing to withdraw, was forcibly

[1] J. M. Robertson, in the *Life of Charles Bradlaugh*, by his Daughter, vol. ii., p. 235. In my whole account of the Bradlaugh incident I have followed Mr. Robertson.

removed and imprisoned in the Clock Tower, but was set free next day. A fresh vote of the House permitted him to affirm, subject to the decision of the law-courts on the legality of the proceeding. Judgment having been given against him in the following March (1881), Bradlaugh lost his seat, and was re-elected, although by a greatly diminished majority. On presenting himself to be sworn, he encountered the same refusal, and was afterwards forcibly prevented from entering the House. Next Session (1882) the same drama re-enacted itself a third time, with an important variation, for on this occasion Bradlaugh administered the oath to himself, disobeyed the order for his exclusion, and was expelled from the House. Re-elected once more, after a year's delay caused by complicated legal proceedings and abortive attempts to secure his peaceful admission, Bradlaugh repeated his old tactics, and, on their failure, voluntarily resigned his seat. Northampton returned him by a higher figure than ever, although not by so great a majority as in 1880. The long conflict was nearing its close. Retaining his seat at the General Election of 1885, Bradlaugh was allowed, by the ruling of a new Speaker, to be quietly sworn. In 1888 he carried an Affirmation Bill through both Houses of Parliament, with the support, among others, of the Archbishop of Canterbury. In 1891, while he lay dying, the Resolutions excluding him in former years were expunged from the records of the House.

It is possible that some of the majorities against Bradlaugh in the Parliament of 1880 may have been swelled by the unpopularity attached to his

name in certain circles as the publisher of a neo-Malthusian pamphlet and an assailant of the House of Brunswick. But that the surviving spirit of religious bigotry is responsible for by far the greater part of the hostility he encountered seems probable, especially when viewed in the light of another and much less famous episode, now to be fully related for the first time in an English history.

While the question of Parliamentary oaths was giving rise to acrimonious debates in the House of Commons, the more general question of the limits to free discussion in religious matters came once more before a court of law. In February, 1883, Mr. G. W. Foote, a leading member of the Secularist party, was prosecuted, with two other persons, for the publication of a special Christmas number of the *Freethinker,* in which were certain woodcuts ridiculing the objects of Christian worship. Probably the contents of the publication were of an offensive character—as the attacks on various royal and noble personages in *Punch* used to be—and would have disgusted many who had no more theological belief than Mr. Foote. But nobody was obliged to read the incriminated publication, and a mere glance at the cover was enough to warn off anyone to whom the inside would have been distasteful. What really provoked the prosecutors was the adverse influence they supposed such a work would exercise on the religious belief of the masses, and therefore they were really making war on freedom of religious discussion, purposely choosing for attack a mode of expressing opinion from which serious freethinkers, like Mr. John

Morley, would be careful to dissociate themselves. As the result of a trial conducted with gratuitous harshness by Mr. Justice North, Mr. Foote and his two associates were sentenced to twelve, nine, and three months' imprisonment respectively. "The same judge, it is recorded, let off with three months' imprisonment a ruffian who had killed a coffee-stall keeper with a kick on the face when he was refused a second cup of coffee until the first had been paid for."[1]

While undergoing his sentence Mr. Foote was prosecuted on another charge of blasphemy before a judge of a very different character from North, Lord Chief Justice Coleridge. In charging the jury, Coleridge demolished the old fallacy that Christianity is part of the common law, in any sense that would make the denial or the derision of its doctrines a crime independently of special legislation; besides expressing a general disapprobation of all religious persecution in a way that seemed to cover the particular charge brought before him. On this occasion the jury disagreed, and the prosecution was dropped.[2]

The attacks on Mr. Foote seem to have grown out of the conflict with Bradlaugh, whom it was hoped to implicate in the same charge of blasphemy, and thus to disable from continuing the fight for his seat. Ultimately, the affair resulted in a great extension of religious liberty, and this was brought about in a characteristically English fashion, by making a scene, or, rather, a succession of scenes.

[1] J. M. Robertson, *op. cit.*, vol. ii., p. 326.

[2] Robertson, *op. cit.*, vol. ii., p. 333; H. Paul, *Modern England*, vol. iv., p. 307.

Plimsoll had compelled Parliament to give its serious attention to the grievances of sailors in merchantmen by a more extreme application of the same method; and we shall now see how a group of Irishmen brought Home Rule into the first line of political interests by making themselves a nuisance to the House of Commons.

Isaac Butt, who had both created the Home Rule party and led it till his death in 1879, never advanced the cause one single step by the methods of eloquence, reason, and moderation. In 1875 he was joined by a young Irish Protestant squire of little education or rhetorical skill, but of supreme practical ability—Charles Stewart Parnell. The new member belonged to a type most unlike the conventional Irishman of English imagination, but represented more largely among the higher classes of Ireland than among the higher classes of England. Taciturn, imperious, unscrupulous, quick to form resolutions and patient in carrying them out—above all, looking to things, not to words—Parnell had read very few books in his life; but one of those he did read, Froude's *English in Ireland,* had impressed him with a conviction, hardly anticipated by its brilliant author, that the English were incapable of governing his countrymen. A profound study of Parliamentary tactics suggested a way of obtaining their consent to the separation of the two islands—which was to make it impossible for the English to govern themselves. Obstruction under various forms had long been a familiar Parliamentary device for preventing the passage of measures that were sure to be carried

if they were put to a direct vote. But Parnell was the first to elaborate it into an instrument for making all legislation next to impossible. His effective employment of obstruction under the Conservative Government served to advertise his more solid qualities, and thus lifted him into a position of unquestioned supremacy among the Irish Nationalists, not only in Parliament, but all over the world. In Ireland he became President of the Land League, an association formed for the purpose of putting the tenants in possession of their holdings. An American tour enabled him to win over the Fenian organisation, and to secure a war treasure for the support of impecunious Home Rulers at Westminster. Soon after the meeting of the new Parliament he was elected Chairman of the Home Rule party, whose votes he henceforth directed with consummate judgment and inflexible determination.

As if to complete the distraction of Parliament, a Fourth party next presented itself on the scene. It never included above four members—Lord Randolph Churchill, Sir Henry Drummond Wolff, the present Sir John Gorst, and Mr. Arthur Balfour; but all four were of distinguished, and two of first-rate, ability. It may be said that the group owed its existence as such to the energy of Sir H. Drummond Wolff in protesting against Bradlaugh's admission to be sworn, and to the weakness of the Speaker in tolerating his intervention. But the lead was soon taken and kept by Lord Randolph Churchill, who made himself conspicuous by the violence of his attacks on

Bradlaugh, and indeed on all who supported the Affirmation Bill, describing them as "the scum of the population." Mr. Balfour, destined afterwards to supersede Lord Randolph in the competition for the future leadership of the Conservative party, professes that sort of religious intolerance which consists in denying the consistency of morality with theological unbelief. If Atheists behave morally, it is, according to him, because they have been brought up in a Christian society and remain permeated by its influence all their lives. Holding such views, he naturally wishes that a dogmatic education should be provided at the public expense for the greatest possible number of children.

For the rest, the Fourth party were distinguished from the main body of Conservatives by their methods rather than by their principles. To miss no opportunity of attacking the Government, and more particularly its illustrious chief, to urge on the official leaders of the Opposition, or to set them an example of factious procedure with a view to taking their places at the next division of the spoils, and, generally speaking, to get themselves talked about—such was the policy, partly copied from Parnell, which alone gave them the standing of a separate Parliamentary group. Their leader, Randolph Churchill, called himself a Tory Democrat. He certainly succeeded, by the employment of demagogic arts, in making himself popular with, or rather interesting to, the masses ; and even before the electoral discomfiture of Beaconsfield's foreign policy he had the merit of privately siding with Gladstone on the Eastern Question. He also favoured a wide extension of

the suffrage, and was prepared, in a rather indefinite way, to govern Ireland according to Irish ideas. Like many others, he looked to a revival of Protectionism under the specious title of Fair Trade as a remedy for England's declining commercial prosperity during the eighties, but advantageously distinguished himself from other Tory Democrats by a timely return to rational economics. Holding so much in common with the Liberals, it may be asked why he never joined their ranks. We can only answer that, as he first blazed into notoriety on the religious question, so a community of religious tradition kept him in touch with the electric main of Toryism when every other strand in the cord connecting him with his party had broken. And perhaps this may be taken for a sign that in the near future differences about the unseen world will more and more determine the lines of party division for Englishmen, as they already determine them for Frenchmen and Italians.

Irish discontent was not in 1880, as it had been twelve years before, the question on which the new Ministry had come into Office; but now, as under Earl Grey, it rapidly overspread the whole political horizon, throwing every other interest into the shade and tending to break the Liberal majority to pieces.

Reactionists taunted Gladstone with having failed to conciliate Ireland by his sacrifice of Protestant ascendancy. But Disestablishment, apart from its other advantages, had the merit of bringing the Land question full into view. As has been observed in a former chapter, religious differences

only masked the real evil, which was that the mass of Irish cultivators, less privileged than Egyptian Fellahin, could be removed from their holdings at the pleasure of landlords mostly belonging to a foreign race. We saw how Bright, following Mill, wished to convert them into peasant proprietors, and how, at Bright's suggestion, a slight attempt in that direction was made by the legislation of 1870. As it happened, however, subsequent developments took their start, not from the Purchase Clauses in the Land Act of that year, but from the provision of Compensation for Disturbance. Tenants who were evicted for not paying their rent received no benefit from this arrangement; and the prevailing agricultural distress, by multiplying the number of such insolvent debtors, gave harsh landlords a welcome opportunity for clearing them off their estates without expense. In the opinion of many besides the evicted tenants themselves, their inability to pay arose from excessive rents, difficult to find in the best times and impossible in the worst. To carry out the evictions military force was needed, involving conflicts between the soldiery and the mob, and leading, in some instances, after the eviction had been accomplished, to the murder of the landlord, of his agent, or of the incoming tenant. Then, when persons accused on vehement presumption of committing such murders were put on their trial, witnesses could hardly be induced to come forward against them or juries to convict.

These things had been the invariable accompaniment of Irish distress at other periods; the present agitation brought into existence a new terror before

unknown, or practised, if at all, on a much smaller scale. It consisted in refusing to do any service, paid or unpaid, for those who had offended the tenant interest, and were marked out by it for social excommunication. From its first victim, a certain Captain Boycott, an Englishman who acted as agent for Lord Earne's estate in County Mayo, this method has received the name, which has since passed from English into other languages, of "boycotting." Auguste Comte, in his social philosophy—which is, to a great extent, a romantic resuscitation of mediæval practices under modern forms—recommends the Catholic system of excommunication as a means of bringing moral pressure to bear on malefactors who manage to keep outside the grasp of the criminal law;[1] and George Eliot has illustrated the working of the principle in *Middlemarch* by Caleb Garth's refusal to remain in the employment of a rich man whom he suspects of doing something equivalent to murder. But Comte proposed that the boycott—to use its modern name—should be exercised only at the suggestion of a responsible priesthood, and should never be pushed to physical violence. Irish boycotting observed no such restriction, and rapidly degenerated into violence of the worst description. Parnell, who introduced it into the methods of the Land League, recommended that tenants taking farms whence their predecessors had been evicted should be treated as moral lepers, and left severely alone. But the victims of boycotting, as actually practised, were not left alone. They were threat-

[1] Comte, *Politique Positive,* vol. ii., p. 418; vol. iv., p. 335.

ened, hooted, mobbed, marked out for outrage and murder. Nor was this the worst. By a peculiarly atrocious aggravation the whole family of the offending or obnoxious person was involved in the persecution, and those who disobeyed the interdict by rendering any service to its victims were themselves boycotted also. If they entered a place of worship, it was deserted; if they fell ill, medical aid was forcibly withheld.

Professor Thorold Rogers, the Radical political economist, justly denounced boycotting as un-Christian; but that it should be practised, without rebuke from their priesthood, by the most Christian people in Europe seems to have excited no surprise.

Pending the preparation of their Land Bill, the Liberal Government proposed to meet the situation by a provisional Bill extending the payment of compensation for disturbance to tenants who should be evicted for non-payment of rent, where the inability to pay was the consequence of bad harvests alone.[1] In the Commons twenty Liberals voted against the Bill and fifty more abstained. It failed to pass the House of Lords, and would have failed had none but Liberal Peers voted on the second reading.

Next year (1881) the Government introduced and carried a measure which still forms the basis of Irish agrarian legislation. It embodied the principle of what are called the three F's—Fair Rent, Fixed Tenure, and Free Sale. What constituted a fair rent was to be decided by a Commission appointed for the purpose, and was to remain fixed

[1] H. Paul, *Modern England,* vol. iv., p. 164.

for fifteen years. So long as the tenant paid his judicial rent he could not be disturbed ; and, on a change of tenancy, he could sell his interest to his successor.

This amount of State interference with private contract was attacked by some persons as against the principles of Political Economy. They might as well have said that it was against the principles of astronomy to light fires in winter, or to ice one's drinks in summer. Their mistake was to overlook the difference between a science and an art. It is not the business of an economist as such to prescribe systems of land tenure, although he may supply information without which they cannot be usefully constructed. By combined observation and reasoning he may tell what system in given circumstances enables the largest produce to be extracted, for a continuance, from the soil. In this particular instance it does not seem to have been contended that the produce of Irish estates would be diminished by applying the three F's. Supposing it to be diminished, the loss might be more than compensated by the creation of a thriving peasantry. It was said that capital would not be laid out on improvements in a country where the rights of landlords were so little regarded. But capital was unlikely to seek a country where the collection of rents had become so dangerous. And to say that rents should be collected by military force was not a sufficient answer. Such a system of executing the law will not work, for the simple reason that it is too expensive. A saying much quoted at this time, that "force is no remedy," called forth a good deal of ridicule. On what, it

was asked, does all government rest if not on force? What other guarantee have we against the enemies of society? But government is neither an abstraction nor a celestial visitant armed with supernatural terrors. It rests on public opinion, and disposes of no more power than what opinion allows it to be supplied with. What were called the rights of property in Ireland merely expressed a state of opinion that was rapidly ceasing to exist.

Legislation in restraint of free contract was not limited to Ireland. In England also old ideas about leaving people to bargain for themselves underwent a certain modification. The elections of 1880 showed that Liberalism was making progress in the counties, long the stronghold of Toryism. As a recompense for this partial adhesion the Malt Tax was repealed, to the great joy of the landed interest in general; but the tenant farmers were still more gratified by a Bill enabling them to shoot hares and rabbits on the land they occupied. Hitherto the landlords had reserved for their own exclusive privilege the rather childish occupation of shooting these mischievous animals for amusement, with the result that a large stock of valuable food was annually sacrificed to their maintenance. It seems strange that at a time when the demand for good tenants exceeded the supply farmers should still find themselves unable to arrange by private contract for liberty to shoot or trap the depredators of their property; and that not only should this right have to be secured to them by statute, but that they should be precluded by statute from contracting themselves out of it. In

reality, however, freedom of contract rather gained than lost by the intervention of the Legislature. For Parliament became an agency by which the tenant farmers were able to bargain on more equal terms with the landlords; while the mass of the people reasserted their equitable claim to limit the rights of landed property in such a way that they should not be so abused as to diminish the food supply of the country.

A still more important advance was made in protecting those who could not protect themselves by the Employers' Liability Act of 1880. Hitherto employers of labour had been only liable to pay damages for injuries inflicted on outsiders through the negligence of their workmen; workmen injured by each other's negligence had no remedy against their common employer. For several years the Trade Unions had sought to remove this grievance by legislation, but in vain. Apparently, it did not interest those devoted friends of the people, Disraeli and Lord John Manners. At last, "through the pertinacity of Mr. Broadhurst [a Labour member] a partial reform was obtained from Mr. Gladstone's Government in 1880, in spite of the furious opposition of the great employers of labour sitting on both sides of the House." Employers were made liable for accidents caused by those to whom they had delegated their authority, such as foremen and superintendents. Workpeople might contract themselves out of the Act. "In the vast majority of cases," however, they were not induced to do so. As a consequence, we may suppose, of this increased responsibility the relative number of accidents has diminished. "Whereas in 1877 1 railway employee

in 95 was more or less injured, in 1889 the proportion was only 1 in 195. Whereas between 1873 and 1880 1 coalminer in 446 met his death annually, between 1881 and 1890 the proportion was only 1 in 519."[1]

"In 1893–94 [under a Liberal Government] a further amending Bill passed the House of Commons which swept away the doctrine of common employment and placed the workman with regard to compensation on the same footing as any other person. A clause making void any agreement whereby a workman forewent his right of action was rejected by the House of Lords, and the Bill was thereupon abandoned."[2] So far, Tory democracy does not seem to have been very active on behalf of its clients. But in 1897 it woke up. "The Workmen's Compensation Act of that year introduced into the law the new principle that an employer must, subject to certain limitations, insure his workmen against the risks of their employment. At the same time, the right of a workman to bargain away his claim to compensation was in reality, though not in form, nullified, since any contract whereby he foregoes the right to compensation secured him by the Workmen's Compensation Act is effective only where a general scheme for compensation agreed upon between the employer and the employed secures to the workmen benefits at least as great as those which they would derive from the Compensation Acts; and this arrangement must be sanctioned by a State official."[3] The

[1] Webb, *History of Trade Unionism,* pp. 351–52.
[2] *Ibid.*
[3] A. V. Dicey, *Law and Opinion in England,* p. 282.

principle of liability for compensation has still more recently been extended to domestic servants by a Liberal House of Commons.

Thus, after a long delay, a principle first enunciated by Bentham's most trusted disciple, Edwin Chadwick,[1] and fully consistent with Bentham's philosophy, has been carried out.

Finally, in 1880, Mundella's Education Act completed the provision for securing the school attendance of working men's children by making it a duty imperative on the various local bodies commissioned for the purpose to exercise the powers of compulsion they already possessed. In 1891 elementary education was also made completely free, and this seems a logical consequence of making it compulsory, not because the State imposes a duty on the parents which they may or may not recognise, but because it deprives them of the addition to their income formerly provided by the compulsory labour of their children ; so that, were the children fed and even clothed at the expense of the community, their parents would not be in a better position than before. In this connection, let me again recall the fact that three Benthamites—Roebuck, George Grote, and Sir William Molesworth—were strong supporters of State education ; a proof, among others, that philosophical Radicalism was more consistent with itself through the whole nineteenth century than any other political school of the same duration.

Compulsion has secured the objects its promoters had in view. "It was calculated that in 1870 a

[1] *Dictionary of National Biography,* Supplement, vol. i., p. 407.

million and a half of children were receiving a fairly efficient education."[1] In 1882 the average attendance had risen to three millions, of whom two millions were accounted for by the Voluntary schools.[2] In 1895 these showed an increase of half a million, and the Board-schools of nearly a million.[3] In 1905 the total attendance for England and Wales was five millions and a quarter.[4]

Before reviewing the foreign policy and the Irish administrative policy of Gladstone's Government it will be convenient to say something about his last great legislative achievement, the provisional completion of Parliamentary Reform by the extension of Household Suffrage to the counties in 1884. For ten years previously this had been part of the Liberal programme, and resolutions for carrying it into effect were annually moved by the present Sir George Trevelyan in the Conservative House of Commons. In principle the Tories were not ostensibly opposed to the enfranchisement of the rural householder. "I have not the slightest doubt," said Disraeli, "that he possesses all those virtues which generally characterise the British people," and is as well qualified to vote as the town householder.[5] Being, however, a Conservative as well as a Tory, he thought it more important to keep our electoral system unchanged than to give the cottagers an opportunity for bringing their virtues to bear on the choice of Parliamentary

[1] Craik, *The State in its Relation to Education*, p. 119.
[2] *Ibid*, p. 130. [3] *Ibid.*
[4] *Whitaker's Almanack* for 1907, p. 268.
[5] Kebbel, *History of Toryism*, p. 371.

representatives. In fact, whatever Tory Democrats might say, the unenfranchised labourers were more likely to look on the Liberals, and especially on the party led by Gladstone, as their real friends; so that another Reform Bill could hardly fail to benefit that party.

A Bill for the extension of Household Suffrage to the counties involved such a vast increase in the number of rural voters as logically to necessitate a sweeping redistribution of seats. As in 1866, Gladstone considered it advisable to separate the two measures, putting franchise first. On that occasion his tactics had resulted in the division of his party and the wreck of his Government. This time—thanks, perhaps, to the Caucus—more perfect discipline prevailed, and his County Suffrage Bill passed the Commons by a large majority. But it was thrown out by the Lords, whose opposition gave rise to a great agitation for such a reform in the constitution of the upper House as would incapacitate it from permanently thwarting the popular will.

It cannot, however, be denied that on the question immediately at issue the Peers had a strong case. What they, or rather the Conservative leaders who represented them, maintained was that, as the strength of the Conservative party lay in the counties, and as they would probably lose a number of county seats under Household Suffrage, they could not be expected to give the Liberals this advantage except at the price of a considerable addition to the county representation as a whole, with a corresponding diminution of the seats assigned to the boroughs. And not only had the

Peers a good case, but they had also a strong position. For, practically, no change could be made in the constitution of the Upper House without an appeal to the people; and, under the existing electoral law, such an appeal might well have resulted in the return of a Conservative majority.

Thanks partly to the Queen's intervention, a way was found out of the deadlock. The leaders on both sides met and arranged a scheme of redistribution by which the counties gained so many seats as actually to return more than half the members for England and Wales, instead of something under two-fifths as before. The result of their private deliberations was obediently accepted by their followers on both sides, and the two Bills, for Franchise and Redistribution, passed into law before the end of 1884.

As it happened, the great increase in the number of county seats redounded entirely to the benefit of the Liberals, and saved them from a crushing defeat at the next General Election, which revealed the fact that Conservatism had been making extraordinary progress in the great cities, especially London, Liverpool, Manchester, Leeds, and Sheffield, where the Liberals had confidently reckoned on carrying from two-thirds to three-fourths of the seats.[1] In Ireland also the loss to Liberalism under the new franchise was great, the vast majority of members returned being Parnellites and the remainder Conservatives.

[1] *The Radical Programme,* pp. 5–6. Instead of fifteen Tories, as the writer expected, London sent up thirty-seven (*The Political History of England,* 1837–1901, p. 371).

In order to explain the great loss of popularity suffered by the Liberals during their five years' tenure of office, we have now to pass briefly in review the foreign, colonial, and Irish policy of Gladstone's Government.

With regard to the Eastern Question, Gladstone, as might be expected, assumed an attitude markedly contrasting with that of his predecessor. As a reward for their heroic exertions in the recent war, it had been agreed that the Montenegrins should receive an accession of territory at Turkey's expense. But the Porte was in no hurry to make the required cessions until a naval demonstration of the Powers, organised by England, compelled it to yield. Europe had also recommended the cession of Thessaly and Epirus to Greece, but rather as a pious wish than as a command. In 1881 Gladstone again brought pressure to bear at Constantinople, with so much effect that about seven-tenths of the territory in question was added to the Hellenic kingdom.

It has already been mentioned how, by a righteous reversal of Lytton's policy, Candahar was re-united to Cabul. To undo the mischief wrought by the late Government in South Africa proved a harder task. Gladstone, in his electoral campaign, had very properly denounced the annexation of the Transvaal as an attack on freedom; but after taking office he showed no inclination to give back the Boers their independence, although the Radical section of his Cabinet desired it. Sir Owen Lanyon, a British officer charged with the administration of the Transvaal, described the Boers, in language recalling that which had been used of

came to an end. Against the intentions of the Ministers who sent out the expedition, a virtual English Protectorate has since been established in Egypt, thereby securing the alternative route to India.

Before long, however, new and almost insuperable difficulties arose out of what seemed such an easy conquest. With the help of English officers Ismail had built up a huge Sudanese empire, containing ten millions of inhabitants and extending from the Nubian frontier to the great lakes of Central Africa. As recent converts to Islam, the Sudanese were animated by a spirit of passionate religious fanaticism. Content to obey a Mohammedan ruler at Cairo, they revolted against his infidel successors. Under the guidance of a prophet known as the Mahdi, whose career recalls the legendary exploits of a Moses or a Samuel, they attacked and surrounded the Egyptian garrison, scattered in helpless isolation over a vast extent of inland territory. An Egyptian army sent to relieve the garrisons under Hicks Pasha, an English officer in the service of the Khedive, fell into an ambuscade and was annihilated, the commander himself being among the slain.

Hitherto the English Government had disclaimed all responsibility for what Tewfik chose to do or not to do beyond the southern frontier of Egypt. It was his business to maintain or to withdraw the garrisons as he pleased. Finally, under pressure of public opinion, orders were sent from London for the evacuation of the Sudan. At the suggestion of an impulsive newspaper editor, the perilous mission of bringing off the besieged garrisons was

entrusted to an impulsive mystic, General Gordon. As a young man Gordon had crushed a formidable rebellion against the Emperor of China. In middle life he had done more than any other man to establish Egyptian dominion in Central Africa, using his authority to suppress the slave trade. What he might now have done had his advice been accepted or adequate support sent out in response to his urgent messages from Khartoum, we do not know. As it was, he held out for ten months against overwhelming odds. An expedition sent to relieve him arrived too late. Hearing of its approach, the Mahdi delivered his final assault on January 26th, 1885. Khartoum fell, and Gordon, who had been believed, perhaps believed himself, to bear a charmed life, was among the slain.

Before England had recovered from her indignation, and Gladstone's Government from the discredit of what Randolph Churchill called the abandonment of the Christian hero, war with Russia seemed close at hand. It had been arranged that the frontier between Afghanistan and Russian Turkestan should be drawn by a joint Commission acting on behalf of the two interested Powers. While the delimitation was still in progress the Afghans occupied a place called Penjdeh, of which Russia claimed to be the legitimate owner. Without waiting for the Commission's award, the Russians attacked and drove them out of it with much loss of life. Such, at least, was the account received and credited in England, with the result that serious preparations for war were begun. On the other hand, it was maintained by the Russian

authorities, not without some support in the English Press, that the Afghans had been the aggressors and had brought their fate on themselves. At first the two Governments agreed to submit the question to arbitration, but afterwards preferred arranging it by direct negotiation. Penjdeh remained Russian, and no more was heard of the alleged outrage on our Afghan allies. Its historic effect was to lower England in the eyes of Europe and the Liberal Cabinet in the eyes of England, although their rivals would have been even less inclined to make war for such a quarrel.

Gladstone and his Government were still more unfortunate in their relations with disorder in Ireland than with disorder in Africa and Asia. Their provisional settlement of the agrarian question only brought the Nationalist question more fully into view. They prosecuted Parnell on a charge of seditious conspiracy, but failed to satisfy a Dublin jury of his guilt. Then, taking advantage of the exceptional powers conferred on them by the suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act, they imprisoned him without a trial. The only apparent result was a fresh epidemic of agrarian outrages. Parnell, on his side, soon got tired of being in prison, and promised, if he were let out, to co-operate with the Government in passing Liberal measures. He was, in fact, set free after a short detention, but not, as would appear, on the strength of his promise, which proved rather embarrassing than otherwise to those who were to benefit by it, and whom public opinion now accused of leaning for support on a rebel and a traitor.

Anyhow, a more gracious treatment of Ireland was in contemplation. W. E. Forster, Gladstone's Irish Secretary, had given much offence to Irish susceptibilities by his unconciliatory manners and roughly repressive administration. His position gradually became untenable, and on May 2nd, 1882, he resigned. Four days afterwards his successor, Lord Frederick Cavendish, Lord Hartington's brother, was murdered in the Phœnix Park, Dublin, with his Under Secretary, T. H. Burke. There had been no intention of killing Lord Frederick; he lost his life in a vain attempt to interfere between the assassins and Burke, their destined victim. But if the new Chief Secretary fell by accident, his predecessor Forster and the Viceroy, Lord Cowper, only escaped by accident, for the original plot had been directed against them as well as against Burke.[1] In England many people looked on the crime as the natural result of making any concessions to Irish demands. A new Coercion Bill was rushed through Parliament, followed, it is true, by a Bill relieving tenants from the arrears of rent, with partial compensation to the landlords from the unspent Irish Church Fund. Meanwhile, agrarian outrage and murder continued to rage with greater virulence than before; and Nationalist emissaries from America exploded parcels of dynamite in the public buildings of London. A number of criminals, including the Phœnix Park murderers, were discovered and punished; but this did not promote a better feeling between England and Ireland.

[1] H. Paul, *Modern England*, vol. iv., p. 293.

In the face of such difficulties and disasters it is a marvel that Gladstone's Government should last so long and achieve so much both at home and abroad. What finally brought about their fall was a proposed increase of taxation necessitated by the Sudanese and Afghan muddles. Their new imposts threatened the public-house interest, which, as usual, found staunch support on the Tory benches. An understanding with the Conservative chiefs that, if they came into office, the Coercion Act of 1882 should not be renewed secured Parnell's support. The great Ministry fell by a majority of 12 (June, 1885). So many Liberals were absent unpaired as to give the idea that the leaders rode for a fall.

Lord Salisbury came into office with a Ministry of caretakers, including Lord Randolph Churchill as its most conspicuous member. In the autumn a General Election took place with an electorate five million strong, of whom three million belonged to the working classes. Voting began, as usual, in the boroughs, and there the Conservatives won a series of unexpected successes, with the help of the Irish vote, which the Nationalist leaders had directed to be thrown on their side, or rather against the Liberals, whom they had now come to regard with deadly hatred. But the newly-enfranchised agricultural labourer broke away from the squire and the parson, turning the scale against Conservatism to such an extent that only 249 supporters of Lord Salisbury were returned. The final result was a deadlock; for the Parnellites numbered 86, and were these to combine with the 249 Conservatives—as they certainly would at the first opportunity, in order to make all government

impossible — their united forces would exactly balance the Liberal strength, which only amounted to 335 in a House of 670 members.

In such circumstances the Liberal leader had to choose between Home Rule, against which he had lately declared, as the price of the Irish vote, and exclusion from office until the next General Election, if not for the rest of his life. He chose Home Rule, with what ruinous consequences to his party the next chapter will show.

CHAPTER XVIII.

TANGLED ISSUES

WHEN the new Parliament met, in January, 1886, Gladstone had already declared for Home Rule. He soon found himself in a position to ascertain how far his old political associates were prepared to join in his change of front. Defeated on an Amendment to the Address by a coalition of Liberals and Parnellites, Lord Salisbury resigned, and was succeeded by the aged statesman whose place he had taken little more than seven months previously. The new Cabinet were agreed on the principle that a certain measure of self-government should be granted to Ireland. This, however, was going further than some of Gladstone's late colleagues were prepared to follow. Sir Henry James, the greatest Parliamentary lawyer in the Liberal party, refused the Lord Chancellorship rather than support Home Rule in any form. For the same reason Lord Hartington would not return to office, as neither would Lord Derby, who had left the Conservatives—he never was a Tory—to join Gladstone a few years before. Lord Selborne, Mr. Goschen, and John Bright, who had all formerly held high office under the same chief, also offered an uncompromising opposition to the new departure. Bright's name carried the highest authority of all, from his long championship of the

Irish cause and the absolute sincerity of his political convictions.

More calamitous still was the loss of two Ministers, Mr. Chamberlain and Mr. Trevelyan, who resigned when Gladstone's Home Rule Bill was laid before the Cabinet. Mr. Chamberlain had hitherto been known as the most advanced of the official Liberals, even standing sponsor to a recently-published "Radical Programme"; and many looked up to him as the future leader of the party. Mr. Trevelyan's talent was literary rather than oratorical; but he also had been named among possible future Premiers; he had two years' experience of Ireland as Chief Secretary; and, above all, his reputation for honesty was of the highest. It augured ill for any measure that these men could not accept it.

The Home Rule Bill proposed to give Ireland a Parliament of her own, with an Executive responsible to it alone. It was known that an Irish House of Commons, if left to itself, would imitate the British Colonies in establishing Protection; accordingly, provision was made that it should not meddle with trade. It was known that the priests, if they were permitted, would use their influence to procure a large endowment for the Roman Catholic Church from the Dublin Parliament; accordingly, endowments to any religious community were forbidden. It was known that the gift of Home Rule without the power of confiscating land-rents to any extent would be derisory; therefore, it was arranged that provision should be made in a separate Bill for buying out such landlords as would not trust the new Legislature to protect their

rights, the purchase money to be raised on the credit of the imperial exchequer.

The Home Rule Bill was defeated on the second reading by a majority of thirty, ninety-three Liberals voting against it (June 7th). Gladstone dissolved, as he had a perfect right to do, for with such a division of parties no Government was possible. The constituencies returned a decisive answer. Gladstone's Liberal opponents—or, as they were now called, the Liberal Unionists—lost fifteen seats, but the Conservatives gained sixty-seven, thus nearly quadrupling the majority against Home Rule. For the third time in little over a year there was a change of Ministers, Lord Salisbury resuming the Premiership, with Lord Randolph Churchill for his second in command. But the victory had really been won by the Liberal Unionists, and, above all others, by Mr. Goschen, who became Chancellor of the Exchequer on Lord Randolph's resignation and political eclipse in the following December. In after years, as First Lord of the Admiralty, this distinguished statesman took a leading part in that great work of naval reconstruction which has made our fleet superior to any hostile combination ever likely to be put in line against it. Lord Goschen—to give him his present title—is the son of German parents, and is clearly filled with that intense patriotism, comparable to the enthusiasm of converts, which so often animates the children of foreign settlers towards their adopted country, and which is everywhere noticeable among European Jews.

Gladstone had sincerely desired that Home Rule

should not be treated as a party question; and he had offered to co-operate with Lord Salisbury in bringing about a settlement of it by the Conservative Ministry. But that such an idea should have occurred to him as feasible shows with how much ignorance of the world the world may be governed. What misled him on this occasion was probably the success of his negotiations the year before with the Conservative leaders on the details of the Redistribution Bill. But the two cases offered no parallel, for it was precisely on the details, not on the principle, of popular representation that disagreements existed. With Home Rule the principle was everything; and Conservatism might as well have ceased to exist as accept it. Irish autonomy meant a fundamental change in the Constitution; a personal offence to the Queen, who hated it; a measure, more or less, of confiscation; a danger to Protestantism; an apparent triumph to the enemies of England. Justice, freedom, nationality, were the leading ideas invoked on behalf of the new departure; but these had long been watchwords of Liberalism. They might appeal to individual Conservatives like Lord Carnarvon, whom a brief residence in Dublin as Viceroy had converted to Home Rule; to the mass of the party they stood for that particular kind of canting sentiment which is used as a cloak for selfish ambition.

Nor was this all. Apart from principle, and considered merely from the Parliamentary point of view, Liberalism had everything to gain, Toryism everything to lose, by a scheme of Home Rule which would exclude the Irish members from the House of Commons. It meant the speedy return

of Gladstone to power with a solid majority of 112 at his back, relieved from the Bradlaugh question, relieved from Parnellite obstruction, relieved from the Fourth Party, installed for the rest of his active life as omnipotent dictator of Great Britain. On the other hand, before Parliament met it was already evident to Lord Salisbury, as to the whole world, that a considerable section of the Liberal party would abandon their leader on the Irish question and coalesce with the Conservatives, thus giving them a majority in the whole House.

Many thought at the time, and many perhaps still think, that Home Rule was imposed on the Liberal party by the will of its chief. If we understand this to mean that it was accepted without enthusiasm, the notion is not true. It would rather seem that the great majority of Liberals were already leaning that way, and were only waiting for a signal from the leader to declare their conversion. It is no proof to the contrary that eight Liberal Unionists out of nine retained their seats, and that they formed a larger proportion of the party in the Parliament of 1886 than in the Parliament of 1885. For, by an agreement between the Unionist leaders, Liberal candidates who had voted against Home Rule were supported by the Conservatives in nearly every contested election; and many were old favourites whose personal popularity made it hopeless for a Home Ruler to be run against them. By the nature of the case these men, being advanced in life, were the first to drop off, and their seats, as they fell vacant, were generally filled up by Gladstonian Liberals, thus giving rise to an

exaggerated impression that the country was coming round to Home Rule. On Gladstone himself the support of his party, which he confounded with the English working classes, acted as a powerful stimulant, converting what seems at first to have been a resolution adopted solely on grounds of expediency into an ethical conviction held and expressed with all the energy of his rich and passionate nature; while his fervid utterances, in their turn, communicated fresh enthusiasm to the followers, whose opinions he fed with an inexhaustible stream of argument and illustration.

Assuming that the masses were on his side, the new leader of the Home Rule party declared that in all the great political issues of the previous sixty years they had been right and the classes wrong. It was candid on his part to say so, for the clearest instance of such a correct judgment had been given in the case of the American War, when he himself had sided with the slave-holders against the majority of the English people; but he might have remembered how, in his youth, the masses were against Catholic Emancipation, which the classes, as represented by an unreformed House of Commons, had repeatedly approved. A still better evidence of fallibility is that the oracle does not always agree with itself. In three General Elections, coming sufficiently near together, a plebiscite has been practically taken on Home Rule. It was rejected in 1886, accepted in 1892, and rejected again in 1895.

Besides the masses, which have proved such an untrustworthy tribunal, Gladstone appealed to another and more select authority, the historians,

whom he claimed as supporters of Home Rule. But neither could this special jury agree on a verdict. Discounting politicians who write history, Froude, Lecky, Seeley, and Professor Goldwin Smith stood for the Union; Freeman, Gardiner, York Powell, and Mr. Oscar Browning for Home Rule.

On the other hand, a contemporary writer, himself holding advanced Liberal opinions, exaggerates when he says that the intellect of the country was against Home Rule.[1] There certainly was a preponderance of distinguished names on the Unionist side. Herbert Spencer, Tyndall, Huxley, Henry Sidgwick, James Martineau, Jowett, Fitzjames and Leslie Stephen, Tennyson, Browning, Swinburne, Matthew Arnold, make up, with the historians already named, an imposing list; and in some ways every one of them was a Liberal. But against these we have to set, besides the Home Rule historians, Ruskin, Mr. George Meredith, Mr. Bryce, Mr. John Morley, Mr. Frederic Harrison, Professor Beesly, and, as a later accession, the present Sir George Trevelyan, who rejoined the Gladstonian Liberals on the removal of certain particulars to which he objected in the Home Rule Bill of 1886.

Turning from authority to reason, let us now consider the arguments by which the adhesions on either side were ultimately determined. Those in favour of Home Rule—besides the motives of political expediency already specified, which probably suggested Gladstone's scheme in the

[1] Mr. Herbert Paul, in *Modern England,* vol. v., p. 58.

first instance and won for it the adhesion of his party as a whole, in the hope of securing their Parliamentary position for another term of years—were the great Liberal ideas of nationality, justice, and freedom. Indeed, it is a principle admitted by the best English Conservatives, as well as by most Liberals, that nations are, on the whole, best governed by themselves—that is to say, by rulers of their own race and their own choice; and it was on this principle that the efforts of Greece, Belgium, Italy, Hungary, Poland, and the Balkan Peninsula had met with such ardent sympathy among Englishmen. Now, a century of agitation proved that the Irish people constituted a true nationality, visibly marked off as such by the natural frontier of the sea. Was it not, then, unjust and unreasonable to withhold from them what the Continental despots had been so severely censured for taking from the inhabitants of alien countries subjected, by conquest or inheritance, to their sway?

There is, however, another principle that sometimes meets and overbears the claim of a people to be free, and that is no other than the supreme law of self-preservation. It was invoked on this occasion by England just as it had been invoked, with the full approval of many advanced Liberals, by the majority of the American people against the pretension of the Slave States to set up an independent Confederacy, by the Swiss Protestant Cantons against the Sonderbund, and by the French Jacobins of 1793 against the real or supposed Girondist intention of substituting a loose federal tie for the one and indivisible Republic. It was,

and still is, alleged by Unionists that Irish independence would mean a breach of the bond which constitutes the integrity of the British Archipelago, and holds it together as a single State of the first order. Granting the existence of a steady movement towards the emancipation of nationalities in modern Europe, there is, they say, another movement towards the formation of great agglomerations, and this movement, whenever the two have collided, has proved the stronger, as in the examples already cited of Switzerland and America, to which may be added the attempted Federal Republic of Spain in 1873.

Again, Irish independence would mean more than the deduction of so much territory and population from the resources of Britain ; it would mean their addition to the resources of any Power with which we might at any time be at war. More especially, it would mean the conversion of an island only four hours' steam from England's shores into a permanent outpost of the United States, with its millions of American-Irish citizens in a state of permanent conspiracy for the destruction of England and her empire.

To these alarmist prophecies the English Home Rulers replied that there was no wish to break up the unity of the archipelago or of the empire : what Ireland wanted was not national independence, but autonomy, liberty to manage her own affairs in her own way. So much had been conceded, with the happiest results, to England's great transoceanic colonies ; and the same results might reasonably be expected to follow from Home Rule. Experience also showed that somewhat similar

arrangements had succeeded perfectly in the cases of Norway and Hungary, neither of which kingdoms wanted complete independence.

Unfortunately for the Liberal optimists, Parnell himself, addressing an American audience, had announced, in his own name and in the name of his friends, their intention of not resting until they had "destroyed the last link that keeps Ireland bound to England"; while Mr. Sexton, the most eloquent of the Nationalist orators, had proclaimed that between England and Ireland there never could be any feeling but the passion of hate. The history of their relations also seemed to show that every concession to Ireland had been used as leverage for gaining further concessions, Catholic Emancipation leading to the demand for Repeal, Disestablishment and agrarian legislation to obstruction and Home Rule. Colonial self-government could not be quoted as a precedent; for, in the first place, Canada and Australia were bound by the strongest motives of self-interest to keep up their connection with the mother country; and, in the next place, if they chose to separate, whatever the loss to her prestige, England's power would remain what it was before, or would even be increased by no longer having distant dependencies to defend. As for the European parallels, Norway, by severing the last link with Sweden, has turned the tables on Separatist logic; while Hungary has shown herself a permanent danger to the stability of the Austrian monarchy.

Besides the general presumption arising from the whole tenour of Irish agitation, there were particular reasons for believing that Home Rule

would be merely a stepping-stone to complete separation. Gladstone's scheme left Ireland with four formidable grievances, on any one of which a claim to complete independence might be based. It imposed on Ireland an amount of imperial taxation which Parnell declared to be much in excess of what was just. It withheld freedom to abolish Free Trade, a disability which Irish agitators might be trusted to represent as a tyrannous restriction imposed in the interests of English manufacturers. It forbade religious endowments; and, in view of the fact that the Protestant Church had retained a handsome share of its former wealth, the Roman Church might be expected to claim, on principles of elementary justice, a subsidy from the State of at least four times that amount—say thirty millions. Finally, the new Land Bill, tending to make the State the universal landlord, while it lowered rents considerably, transferred their collection from agencies that might be appeased or frightened to an inexorable and irresistible authority. All these grievances might, of course, be remedied with the consent of the English Parliament. But the very necessity of having to appeal at every step to an alien Legislature for leave to exercise a natural right would be resented as an intolerable humiliation by a people that had learned to look on itself as a nation among the nations of the world.

Such, stated on the broadest grounds of political expediency, was the Unionist case against Home Rule. Yet at that period there prevailed through all grades of English society, from the Heir

Apparent to the humblest peasant, and from the most reactionary Ritualist priest to the narrowest Nonconformist minister, such a passion for justice, and such hopeless weariness of the Irish incubus, that all these problematic perils might have been cheerfully faced in the confidence that England need only stretch out her invincible arm at any moment, if necessary, to take back her gift if it were abused—had justice and liberty only spoken with an undivided voice. What gave the situation such tragic poignancy, what shattered the higher Liberalism from crown to base, was the perplexity, the ambiguity, of those ideal guides. Liberal sympathies had gone out whole-heartedly to Italy, Hungary, and Poland, for there they were given to nations at unity with themselves. United Ireland only existed as the title of a violent party newspaper. It was claimed that a third of the Irish people, and *that* a third including far the larger share of Irish property, industry, intelligence, and enlightenment, looked with dismay on the prospect of being handed over to the control of an ignorant and ravenous populace, led partly by unscrupulous demagogues and partly by the most fanatical priesthood in Catholic Europe. Now, what priestly dictation meant had recently been shown in the English Parliament by the object-lesson of the Bradlaugh case. A Secularist member, himself Ireland's friend, had been forbidden either to affirm or to swear, because in division after division the scale had been turned against religious liberty by Home Rule—that is, Rome Rule—votes. A very intelligible anti-clericalism had perhaps something to do with the fact that, among English Rationalists,

Huxley, Froude, Professor Goldwin Smith, and Mr. Swinburne were Unionists, as were also the Irish Rationalists, Tyndall and Lecky, to whom may be added Professor Thomas Maguire, a Roman Catholic, but also a Hegelian, and therefore, presumably, a Modernist. Even assuming Irish Protestants to be as a rule no more liberal than Irish Catholics, it was no longer in their power to be intolerant, while under Home Rule they would be less able to defend themselves than the Catholics if, as many believed likely, they were to be attacked by such modern methods of persecution as boycotting. At any rate, the passionate hostility of Protestant Ulster to Home Rule, amounting to threats of civil war if it were granted, showed that revolt against an alien domination was a game that two could play at. And the prospect of having English troops called in to shoot down men whose only crime was their fidelity to England did not appeal to the imaginative sympathy of the English electorate.

Ulster could at least fight for independence from Celtic and Catholic control. The half million or so of Anglican Protestants scattered over the three other provinces would be left as sheep to the slaughter—a likely fate if it was thought that they stood between the ultra-Nationalists and the attainment of their final object, the severance of the last link that bound Ireland to England. Before risking such horrors, it might be as well to try what could be done by less heroic remedies than separation, to give the new agrarian legislation time to do its healing work; above all, to substitute steady execution of the law—what Lord Salisbury called

twenty years of resolute government—for a policy of alternate coercion and concession. O'Connell's Repeal agitation had collapsed; the Young Ireland agitation had collapsed; why should not Home Rule, when confronted by the same steady resistance, disappear into the same limbo of unrealised dreams?

So evenly balanced were the arguments for and against Irish autonomy that the English democracy for a time let its decision hang on rather petty personal considerations. Charges of encouraging political assassination were brought against Parnell, and found, on inquiry, to rest on forged documents; so people thought that, as a compensation, he ought to be allowed to lead a Parliament on College Green. Then he was so unfortunate as to be detected in an unlawful amour, and, being only an uncrowned king, had not authority enough to save himself from exposure in the Divorce Court. The English Home Rule Nonconformists, more squeamish than their adored leader, Gladstone, decided to boycott Home Rule unless it parted company with the only Irish politician capable of managing the Irish Nationalist representatives. These men had re-elected him to be their Chairman after the Divorce Court scandal, but they reversed their vote by a large majority in deference to the English Liberal sentence, and the mass of the Irish people, led by the Catholic hierarchy, followed suit. Parnell fought desperately for his position; but the struggle broke down his health, and in less than a year he was dead.

Nine months afterwards a General Election

placed the Home Rule Liberals, with Gladstone at their head, in power (July, 1892). But their majority only amounted to forty-two; and without the Nationalist vote they would have been in a minority of somewhat more than that figure. In fact, the tide that ran so high after Parnell's vindication had been receding ever since his exposure in the Divorce Court, and had not been arrested by his death. When the General Election of 1892 took place the tide was, so to speak, half-way out; and this unsettled state of public opinion accounts for the small majority given to Home Rule by the whole kingdom, and to the Union by Great Britain.

A second Home Rule Bill was introduced in 1893. It differed from the Bill of 1886 in two important particulars. Ireland was still to be represented in the British Parliament; but her delegation was to be reduced from 103 to 80—that is to say, nearly as many as she would be entitled to in an imperial Parliament elected on the principle of strictly proportionate representation. And no provision was made for compensating the landlords who would certainly be dispossessed of their estates by a tenants' Parliament sitting in Dublin. A Land Purchase Act had, it is true, been passed by the Unionist Parliament; but it did not compel the present owners to sell their estates for whatever the occupiers might think fit to offer, nor was the capital provided large enough to go round if every landlord stood out for a fair price.

Such as it was, this Bill passed the Commons by a majority of thirty-four. Some Liberals are reported to have voted for it only because they

were sure that it would be kicked out by the Lords. And kicked out it was in the Upper House by a majority of more than ten to one. A more fatal blow to Home Rule was Gladstone's resignation next year. The Prime Minister was in his eighty-fifth year, and his senses were beginning to fail. But increasing years and infirmities only made him more and more the object of popular idolatry, so much so that his withdrawal from public life had the effect of alienating many from a cause which, but for his authority, they would never have embraced; or rather it had the effect of making them more sensible to arguments which his authority had hitherto neutralised.

To complete the misfortunes of the Liberal party, Lord Rosebery was chosen to succeed Gladstone as Prime Minister over the head of Sir William Harcourt, by far the ablest and most successful of his colleagues. Harcourt was understood to have no liking for his new chief; nor, with Lord Rosebery's very tepid Liberalism, could any cordial co-operation between the two be expected. England does not love Cabinets that are divided against themselves; and such was the weakness of the new Ministry that it fell in June, 1895, before a vote which really only concerned one of its members, the present Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman. Lord Salisbury resumed office, this time in coalition with the leading Liberal Unionists, the Duke of Devonshire, Mr. Chamberlain, Sir Henry James, and Lord Lansdowne. His nephew, Mr. Arthur Balfour, who, as Irish Secretary, had won the highest reputation for administrative ability and debating skill, became Leader of the House of

Commons, with the prospective inheritance of the Premiership.

On an appeal to the people, the late Liberal Administration—decapitated, discredited, divided, and defeated—had no chance against so powerful and brilliant a band. With the lowest class of voters a less worthy motive than respect for intellectual superiority helped to swell the Unionist ranks. In response to a strong demand for Temperance legislation, Harcourt had introduced a Local Veto Bill, and, although it had to be dropped, the publicans and their clients took the alarm. Those who, like Archbishop Magee, would rather see England free than sober, combining with those who would rather see England drunk than rationally educated, rallied to the cry of Beer and the Bible. The result was a Unionist majority of three to one in England without Wales, and of 152 in the whole kingdom. For the first time since 1874 the Conservatives had a majority over all other parties combined.

The English Empire had been built up by isolated adventurers, with little help or countenance from the nation acting as a whole. Under the guidance of Mr. Chamberlain, the strongest personality in the new Cabinet, England now entered on a career of conscious, grandiose, not always scrupulous, self-assertion and territorial extension. An Egyptian army organised and commanded by English officers overthrew the Dervish host and reconquered the Sudan, constituting it, in a more peculiar sense than even Egypt, as a dependency of England. An attempt made by Frenchmen to

seize a derelict portion of territory formerly subject to the Khedive was abandoned under the menace of our irresistible sea-power. The Transvaal, after a struggle more glorious to the Boers than to ourselves, was re-annexed, the Orange Free State sharing its fate. Russia, our only formidable rival in Asia, saw her armies and fleets destroyed by England's ally, Japan, with whom we have since become more closely linked by a treaty of mutual guarantees.

In order to maintain their majority intact, the Unionist Government, against all precedent, dissolved Parliament in 1900, while the South African War was still in progress. They retained office with a slightly increased majority, but with no more special mandate than to fight until the Boer Republics were subdued. Success proved ruinous to themselves and to their party, which now threw over every pretence of holding Liberal, or even Conservative, principles. In 1902 Mr. Balfour passed a new Education Bill abolishing School Boards and throwing Voluntary schools, which were chiefly Church schools, on the rates—a proposal that even in 1870 had to be withdrawn. It had always seemed a gross injustice to Nonconformists and Secularists that the teaching of what they thought mischievous superstition should be subsidised from the national exchequer. But to resist the payment of imperial taxation because one small portion of it went to help Church schools would have been found impossible in practice. On the other hand, the levying of a local rate in aid of Ritualism or Romanism both made the abuse itself

more palpable and offered its enemies a priceless opportunity for protesting against it. A campaign of passive resistance, as the refusal to pay the new school rates was called, began all over England, and has continued year after year ever since, numbers of men and women allowing their furniture to be seized and sold rather than submit quietly to so hateful an imposition. They were not breaking the law any more than the Parliamentary obstructives break it; they were simply leaving the law to take care of itself. Meanwhile, a vastly greater number of Englishmen, with the English love of fair play in their hearts, although they did not see their way to following the example of the passive resisters, watched them with silent sympathy, accumulating stores of burning indignation against the Government and the party which, without any mandate from the country, had given occasion for such a crying scandal. Others rather welcomed the new Act, in the clear prevision that its authors would ultimately be found to have defeated their own end. For they had facilitated the eventual assimilation of all State-aided schools, voluntary or otherwise, to the old Board schools, which were unsectarian: what was more, they had paved the way to secular education in all elementary schools—a step already taken in the United States—since Church people on their side objected to simple Bible teaching as itself only another form of sectarian religion.

While Mr. Balfour was reviving the old system of privilege and protection in religion, his colleague Mr. Chamberlain was engaged in the congenial task of agitating for its revival in trade. As

Colonial Secretary, he had done much to cultivate a feeling of closer unity between England and her Colonies, which, indeed, had been practically shown on their side by sending numerous volunteers to the help of our armies in the Boer War. It was now proposed to attach them still more closely to the mother country by the concession of certain commercial advantages. So far the reciprocity, as Mrs. Carlyle would say, had been all on one side, seeing that we admitted their staple exports duty-free while they kept out our manufactures by a high protective tariff. At one time a system of Free Trade within the Empire had been suggested, with protective duties against the foreigner alone. But, as this was an arrangement which the Colonial manufacturers could on no account have been induced to accept, a compromise was hit on. Australia had already begun to admit our products into her markets at a slightly lower rate of duties than those levied on the goods of other nations. Why should not she and all the other Colonies be induced to differentiate still further in our favour by our continuing to admit their goods duty free, while taxing all other imports to such an extent as would give Colonial wares, and especially Colonial food-stuffs, an advantage that would enable them to drive all other competitors out of the English market? And this, it was argued, would be only fair in view of the increasing tolls everywhere imposed for protective purposes on English manufactures, to the signal benefit, as was alleged, of the working classes in the countries where that policy had been adopted.

The Tariff Reformers, as Mr. Chamberlain's

followers called themselves, worked this last point with unremitting energy in their addresses to popular audiences, through platform oratory and a cheap daily Press. Increased wages for those already employed, and employment for those out of work, were held out as inducements to abandon the whole commercial system on which this country had lived and thriven for fifty years, and which was looked up to as an ideal by economic thinkers all over the world.

It was a remarkable and suspicious circumstance that Conservatives, of all people, should be found making war on routine and tradition, appealing to reason against prejudice and fetish-worship; remarkable also that capitalists, landowners, and parsons should suddenly develop such an intense interest in the welfare of the artisan and the labourer. Even under the *alias* of Tory Democrat, a Conservative who does not conserve looks like an unintelligible self-contradiction until it has been discovered that he is harking back to the catch-words used by his grandfather sixty years ago.

After all, what the Tariff Reformers urged was not reason, but authority—the authority of Germany, a retrograde military Empire, and the authority of America, whose external policy is controlled by a plutocratic ring. They refused to see that Germany and America owe their increasing prosperity—so far as it is real—not to Protection, but to the sort of scientific education that Conservatism alone prevents England from acquiring.

What the British working man saw clearly through all the bewildering statistics, and still more bewildering calculations, flourished in his face

by the parasites and subsidised organs of the capitalist and landlord interest, was that an attempt was being made to tax his food, for the benefit partly of the rich at home, partly of Colonial millionaires—including the South African Rand-lords, who were importing gangs of coolies to work under durance in gold mines acquired at an enormous cost of English blood and treasure. A remedy for unemployment was, no doubt, highly desirable; but working men were inclined to look for it in a readjustment of the relations between labour and capital on Socialist lines rather than in new taxes on food.

Mr. Balfour, who succeeded Lord Salisbury as Prime Minister in July, 1902, combines with much less strength of character than Mr. Chamberlain a far finer and more cultivated intelligence; nor does he take his opinions at a five years' lease. But he belongs to a class of thinkers whose distrust of expert opinion leads them to reject the modern and scientific view of any subject in favour of some compromise with the older and more popular view. At a time when most men of intellect and learning not in Holy Orders had abandoned the popular theology, he published a book called *The Foundations of Belief*, for the purpose of rehabilitating it by a sceptical attack on reasoned belief in general. Suitability to our convenience seemed to be the test of credibility for this new logic, which in less articulate utterances is a very old logic indeed. He also advocated bimetallism—a convenient and therefore, presumably, a true doctrine for those who wish to pay off their gold debts in a depreciated silver

currency; but, by the same token, an inconvenient and untrue doctrine for their unfortunate creditors. On the question of Tariff Reform Mr. Balfour now professed himself a Free Trader, though not a fanatical one. If foreign countries kept out our goods by exorbitant duties, they were to be coerced into a more liberal policy by the imposition of retaliatory duties on their exports to us. It mattered nothing that retaliation had been long since abandoned after trial by English financiers; that the Protectionist States did not seem to have facilitated commercial relations with each other by their system of mutual prohibition; that retaliation could only work by giving artificial encouragement to industries which would refuse to be suppressed when the foreigner yielded to our demands. Every consideration suggested by experience or expediency gave way before the comprehensive and ingenuous principle that you cannot make a bargain unless you have something to offer.

Differences on economic policy proved fatal to the union of the Unionist Ministry. Mr. Chamberlain resigned because he was a Protectionist; the Duke of Devonshire and others resigned because they were Free Traders; finally, Mr. Balfour resigned, apparently because he was neither a Protectionist nor a Free Trader. His successor, Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, had been chosen Liberal leader in 1899 on the strength, one must suppose, of his Parliamentary abilities, seeing that he had no record of distinguished public services, nor any standing as a popular hero outside the House. His Ministry, however, marks an entirely

new departure in English history from the extent to which it has been made up independently of the oligarchic tradition. Half the members of the Cabinet, carrying at least three quarters its weight of metal, are unconnected by birth with the great governing families; and of these the most popular is the former working man, Mr. John Burns. Regard for simple ability has never before been pushed so far in the choice of an Administration, and it is an earnest of what the future may bring forth. As the demands on Government in respect both to legislative and administrative efficiency grow more numerous and exacting, its functionaries in the higher as well as in the lower grades have to be chosen from a wider area; while again the transfer of Sovereignty, in John Austin's sense, from the middle class to the working class involves, by a sort of compensatory movement, the transfer of high office from the aristocracy to the professional and business classes, in whom the people have more confidence, being more accustomed to resort to them for advice and direction, as was long ago pointed out by James Mill.

Knowing that public opinion was on their side, the Liberals had long been pressing for a Dissolution; and Mr. Balfour, by resigning, placed it in their power to dissolve. The result surpassed their most sanguine expectations, and is without a parallel since 1832. The Unionists were left in a minority of 354—more than double their triumphant majority of 1895. In England, the most Conservative part of the Kingdom, where they had stood at 3 to 1 in 1895, and at more than 8 to 3 in 1900, they

now held little more than three seats to eight. True, the so-called Ministerialists did not form a homogeneous mass, for they included 84 Nationalists and 41 Independent Labour members; but the pure Liberals numbered 387—that is to say, a majority of more than 100 against the field.

This enormous shift in the party balance has been explained by a popular metaphor—the swing of the pendulum. On points of principle, however, there was no oscillation. As at the last two elections, the people voted for keeping their fundamental institutions intact. They were conservative in a better sense than the so-called Conservatives themselves, and more united than the Unionist party. They wished to preserve Free Trade; for, without being very profound economists, they knew that it had expert opinion and, so far as food went, common sense on its side. They wished to preserve and develop the Education settlement of 1870 as against the intrusion of subsidised dogma into the elementary schools. They looked with just suspicion on the importation of coolie labour into South Africa as an attempt to revive the slave-trade, abolished a century before. And now, as always, they condemned the inefficiency that accompanies divided counsels. If it had offended their instincts that Gladstone should separate from his old friends in 1886, and that Harcourt should be at loggerheads with Lord Rosebery in 1895, it offended them still more that Mr. Balfour should neither be able to agree with his late colleagues nor altogether, as appeared, with himself. Finally, it would, perhaps, not be too much if we were to credit the people with a wish

to avoid the mistake of 1885, and to secure the stability of the Liberal Government by giving it a majority over all other parties combined.

In carrying down this narrative to a date so recent as the last General Election, I have somewhat exceeded the limit usually assigned to even the most modern histories. My apology is that no other equally distinct line of demarcation between old things and new offers itself among the events of the immediate past. I propose to conclude with a general survey of the tendencies observable during the whole period embraced in this work.

Chapter XIX.

THE ECLIPSE OF GENIUS

It was shown in the first chapter of this work that the English constitutionalism of the eighteenth century, described by Montesquieu as an organisation of liberty, really amounted to an organisation of anarchy, not satisfying the requirements either of order or of progress, but indirectly favouring the development of individual genius and, to a still greater degree, the growth of material wealth. This genius also devoted itself to no very ideal ends, serving at its best for the creation of new mechanical appliances at home, and at its worst for the furtherance of conquest and rapine abroad; while the greed to which it ministered made men capable of the most heinous crimes.

During the latter part of the eighteenth century, and on into the first decades of the nineteenth, the increasing power of the Crown, instead of building up a new order, adds to the existing anarchy, disorganising the military power of the kingdom, breeding disaffection among its Roman Catholic inhabitants, and driving some of England's noblest citizens, at a time when her very existence was at stake, from the service of the State.

It seems at first as if the French Revolution would merely aggravate the evils under which we suffered, by turning the Government from a machine for levying taxes into an active agency for the

repression of free speech in politics and religion. Such, however, is not the most permanent, nor even the most immediate, effect of that unparalleled upheaval. By kindling into flame all the latent tendencies making for beauty in art, for truth in science, philosophy, religion—nor for these alone, but also for the "manners, freedom, virtue, power" whose loss our lost leader too belatedly deplored—the Revolution regenerates England with less expense of ruin than had been needed for the regeneration of France and Continental Europe. And so, when France turns faithless to her high mission as an evangelist of liberty, England comes forward to defend the cause of oppressed nationalities with sword and pen; first against Napoleon, then, after Napoleon's fall, against the Holy Alliance, until that also dissolves under the far extended influence of Canning's voice and Canning's will.

The power of the Crown, already undermined by the disease, discredit, and discord of its personal representatives, finally succumbs to the new spirit; and soon afterwards the old Tory party goes to pieces, one section uniting with the victorious Whigs, whose prestige is still further heightened by a second French Revolution, giving Parliamentary government on the English model to France. Under their auspices a first instalment of electoral reform transfers Sovereignty from the aristocracy to the middle class. This extension of political rights, so far from weakening the Administration, gives it increased strength, enabling a series of much-needed reforms, inspired by the philosophy of Bentham, to be carried. Then a rich and

privileged State Church gradually makes the position of the reforming Ministers untenable by blocking some of their most important measures, luring away their ablest men, and exciting popular bigotry against the faithful remnant. Yet even so progress is not arrested. For the reactionists defeat their own ends by placing in power a great middle class administrator, who, in his heart, despises the views that he affects to share. Free Trade, long advocated by the philosophical Radicals, finally triumphs under his direction, and the new Conservatism, like the old Toryism, is ruined by his desertion.

Free Trade only gives a triumphant popular expression to a new and peculiar phase of thought, a movement of temporary alienation from the State as such, a more or less declared hostility to all Sovereignty. For many years before the abolition of the Corn Laws, the main current of English Liberalism has flowed in other than political channels; and, indeed, a tendency shows itself all round to seek elsewhere than in the political conflicts of the day for the supreme interests of life, demanding on their behalf complete immunity from State control. A band of Oxford scholars, resenting Parliamentary interference with the Irish Church Establishment, assert the right of the Anglican Church to determine her own doctrine and discipline, and to preside over the spiritual destinies of the nation, by virtue of a divine commission handed down from the Apostles. A host of Presbyterian enthusiasts, casting away the bonds of lay patronage, unite in a new community supported by voluntary contributions. On the

material side it is proposed to supersede the legal relief of poverty by reviving the tutelage of the hereditary nobility over the peasants who cultivate their estates; while others wish to make the working classes altogether independent of eleemosynary aid by encouraging them to found co-operative societies for production and distribution. A series of new works in prose and poetry mark a new age of literary productivity, only less brilliant than the epochs of the Revolutionary war and the Regency. This new literature is not inspired by politics, but by individual motives, either social or philosophical; it does not oscillate, like the earlier and greater literatures, between revolt and resignation, defiance and despair, but is penetrated with infinite love and pity, fed from gorgeous memories, and illuminated by immortal hopes. A new school of history, saturated with literary and artistic feeling, aims at the ideal reproduction of the most stirring scenes, the most heroic figures of the past, in language approaching the effect of plastic or pictorial representation. And, conversely, the greatest prose writer of the century devotes himself to a literary interpretation of painting, architecture, and natural scenery, as a symbolism of the most thrilling emotions and of the profoundest ethical truths.

Science, after 1830, so organises her methods and so extends her domain as to cover the whole field of experience; while the philosophy of the previous century, revived with greater power than ever, declares that outside experience nothing can be known. The modern theories of energy and of evolution, enunciated with more and more distinctness,

are finally combined with the principles of the great English economists in a system of absolute individualism—a grandiose attempt to demonstrate that liberation from the tutelage of the State is the true goal of all reform, and an amount of vital enjoyment strictly proportioned to the vital effort put forth, the destined reward of all virtuous activity in the final stage of human development.

A view of the world and of life so committed to reason, so passionately human, so proudly self-sufficient, even when taking on a religious colouring, implicitly contradicts the pietistic movement, whether under its Tractarian or its Evangelical formulation. With the increasing seriousness of the age this contradiction becomes more explicit, and makes itself felt partly within the Church as a mystical modification of the old teaching, partly both among the clergy and the laity as a destructive criticism of the alleged evidences on which the various theologies have been built up. Carried on simultaneously among the higher and the lower classes of society, with more or less of reticence and caution on the one side, with uncompromising frankness on the other, the disintegrating process leads to a legal decision liberating the ministers of the Establishment from their supposed obligation to regard the whole Bible or any part of it as necessarily true—a decision which, so far, has been much more effective in giving freedom of speech to the laity than in giving it to the clergy.

Side by side with the emancipation of thought and feeling in England we find a world-wide movement for the propagation of political and civil liberty on the English model, partly stimulated by

direct encouragement from England. Peel's fall brings back to power Palmerston, the inheritor of Canning's spirit, and for a period of nearly twenty years the foremost figure in English politics, sometimes opposed on questions of detail by Russell and Gladstone, but at the great critical moments of European history working in fellowship with them. His personality is a potent factor in the Revolution of 1848, leading to the second French Empire, with whose aid he destroys Russia's European ascendancy, thus rendering possible two great triumphs of nationalism—first, the unification of Italy, practically accomplished during his life and with his assistance; then, after his death, the unification of Germany, whose preparation in Schleswig-Holstein an imperfect historical appreciation had led him to oppose.

An anti-slavery movement in America, long fed by English sympathy, leads up, during Palmerston's Administration, to a civil war, profoundly misconceived as to its origin and issues by the governing classes of England, but permanently affecting the future course of her history. After a struggle of unexampled magnitude, democracy triumphs in America, reawakening the dormant democratic spirit of the English people, and so doing for the revived Reform agitation of the middle 'sixties what the second French Revolution had done for middle-class enfranchisement in 1830, while it simultaneously re-kindles the smouldering fire of Irish nationality. English working men, debarred from exercising the right of combination to the full extent represented by their Trade Unions, seek a remedy for their grievances through the

acquisition of the Parliamentary franchise, as their fathers had sought to carry out more visionary schemes of social justice through the instrumentality of the People's Charter. Then the three streams of English Liberalism, rationalist, political, and industrial, uniting in a current of irresistible strength, for a time bear down all before them. Much that the Whigs of 1830 had feared or failed to accomplish is now obtained. Household suffrage, the ballot, Church disestablishment and land reform in Ireland, the relief of Dissenters from Church rates, the nationalisation of the universities, the provision up to a certain point of unsectarian elementary education by the State, the rescue of the Army from plutocratic monopoly — articles mostly of the Benthamite programme—are carried, so to speak, at a rush. Then the reforming Ministers, failing to appreciate the breadth and depth of the movement they profess to lead, find themselves replaced by the reactionists, with whose help they have held their own most advanced followers in check. The Tory leader on his side loses ground by abetting a feeble attempt to restrain the superstitious practices in which Church Toryism finds its most genuine expression.

Meanwhile a more effective stand is made against reviving sacerdotalism by a renewal of the rationalistic movement, this time headed by the most distinguished names in poetry, literature, philosophy, and science—an ample compensation for the temporary defeat of Liberalism in politics. And that defeat is soon turned into overwhelming victory. As in the times of Canning and Palmerston, political Liberalism receives a new impetus from

the sympathy of England with the struggle of nationalism against oppression, represented this time by the Christian subjects of the Porte. Irish interests intervene also, for the fourth time in the century, to complicate the situation, making the task of Liberal statesmen on their return to office incomparably more difficult. Still, thanks to the ever-growing power of the State—itself a result of democratic progress—the legislative and administrative machine, by whichever party leader it may be directed, works with a smoothness and an efficiency before unknown.

It is possible that a concentration of power already so great, and likely to grow greater still, may be viewed by some friends of liberty with jealousy and alarm. It was, in fact, so viewed by Herbert Spencer. This greatest of all English systematic thinkers latterly devoted most of his philosophical activity to upholding the rights of the individual against the claims of the State. Historically his position, like Buckle's, was determined by sympathy with the economists in their fight for the new Poor Law and for Free Trade. Here, however, we are not concerned with the derivation of the theory, but with its truth. Spencer's physiological analogies will not help us much, nor will his general law of evolution, to which others might give a different interpretation. It is a question to be settled on grounds of relative expediency. No doubt there have been occasions in the world's history when similar developments of State sovereignty have proved injurious to the industry, the intellect, the morality, or the general

well-being of the people which experienced them. With ourselves the experience is comparatively new, and perhaps the materials for a comprehensive estimate of its meaning do not yet exist. But so far the prospect seems hopeful. It will be remembered that the experiment of anarchy was tried, more or less, in the eighteenth century, with results which were not satisfactory, even from the standpoint of freedom. The freedom of some meant the enslavement of others, more especially the freedom of parents to bring up their children as they liked. A child necessarily lives in subjection; but compulsory education in a modern schoolroom is, generally speaking, more to its taste—less like slavery—than compulsory toil in a pestilential factory. For grown-up people a visit from the inspector of nuisances involves less restraint than confinement to a sick bed. To take a more complex case, immunity from ecclesiastical tyranny has only been obtained at the price of having an Administration able to carry measures securing it through Parliament. A weak Government, at the mercy of sinister sectional interests, may be easily got to pass Protectionist legislation; to repeal such legislation, or to prevent its re-enactment, are tasks demanding irresistible strength.

Our present enormous naval and military expenditure involves the levying of taxes to a corresponding extent; and this, though sanctioned, after a fashion, by the majority of the electorate, certainly amounts to an abridgment of the liberty of those who pay against their will. Yet even here it may be argued that the practical alternative does not lie between high and low taxes. It lies

between contributions to a fleet and army maintained for defensive purposes by our own Government, and equal contributions made to maintain the fleet and army of some Continental Power, which would annex us if we were not prepared to fight for independence, as Japan was prepared to fight Russia.

Freedom of criticism on the Government is considerably greater now than when a weak and incapable oligarchy held the reins. Freedom of criticism in theology, nearly lost under the long Tory *régime,* has been recovered step by step with the later growth of democracy. At Oxford and Cambridge in particular the change has been most remarkable since Thirlwall was driven from the one and J. A. Froude, several years later, from the other—Thirlwall for opposing compulsory chapel attendance, and Froude for publishing a novel of heterodox tendencies. There, as also at the Scotch universities, Hegel's philosophy has played the same part it played between two and three generations ago in Germany, at once veiling and facilitating the transition from a supernaturalist to a scientific view of nature and man. For a time Hegelians, both of the looser and the stricter observance, were at pains to convey their dissent from the popular theology in language open to an orthodox interpretation. More recently the chief representatives of the school have emulated the plain speaking of Strauss and Feuerbach.

One sometimes hears it said that the Materialism of thirty years ago has been superseded by a theory variously described as Spiritualism and as Idealism. The assertion is doubly misleading. It is not true

that Materialism, in the philosophical sense, prevailed to a greater extent then than now. Mill, Spencer, Lewes, Tyndall, Huxley, and Clifford would have disclaimed the name with as much right as Mr. Haldane or Mr. Asquith. If, on the other hand, the name is used to denote denial of supernatural religion, or as the equivalent of Agnosticism, then it is not true to say that Materialism has been superseded, for such denial is now more common than ever, whether among philosophers or among the educated classes in general.

Materialism in another sense—that is to say, the rage for the acquisition of money valued chiefly as a means for the gratification of animal or childish appetites—has, unhappily, been long on the increase, as is shown, among other ways, by the spread of a passion for gambling through all classes of the community. Rapid industrial progress naturally fixes the attention on money-making, and on the spending or the reinvestment of what is made, as the great interests of life; and gambling enables both these ends to be pursued with the least possible trouble or delay, the gratification of getting money and the gratification of spending it (in fresh stakes) being so combined as to raise each other to the highest pitch of intensity. And democracy, in so far as it favours industrial progress, shares to that extent in the responsibility for its reaction on private life.

It remains to consider the modern movement in its reaction on the intellectual life of the community. So far as this is represented by the amount of

literary genius forthcoming, most qualified judges are, I presume, agreed in thinking that what we have to report is a continuous decline, advancing by a series of downward steps until at the present day we find ourselves in a state of destitution not paralleled since the period preceding the Reformation. It may be open to question whether the generation of Byron, Shelley, and Keats shows any falling-off from the generation of Wordsworth, Hazlitt, Scott, Lamb, Coleridge, Landor, and Jane Austen. But the Regency clearly stands above the Early Victorian period as much as that stands above the Middle Victorian period, and the Middle Victorian above the Late. As for our own age, it would be surprising to learn that any English writer now under fifty has produced a book which will be remembered as literature fifty years hence. The literary output is, indeed, enormous both in prose and poetry; and much talent is devoted to literature as a profession: never before has the average of cleverness, and even of good writing, been so high. But high averages are no substitute for exceptional genius; as Goethe says, a hundred greys do not make one white horse.

This dearth of first-class literary ability has been ascribed to the absorption of the nation's best intellect in scientific work. The explanation might hold good if science had more distinguished names to boast of than literature. Unhappily, she has not. Here also, or, rather, here especially, mediocrity seems to be the order of the day since 1879, the year of Clifford's and Clerk Maxwell's death. We often hear of new discoveries and new

methods, but there is a remarkable impersonality about them; they are the result of co-operation among a number of inquirers rather than of individual genius. It is the same in philosophy, except that philosophy has no such certain results to show. The Early and Middle Victorian heroes, Mill, Bain, Buckle, and Spencer, are supposed to have been superseded—by whom, or for how long, is not clear.

Historical composition, involving as it does both literary and scientific ability, supplies us with another test. An arrangement of nineteenth-century historians in chronological groups gives us first: Hallam, Napier, Milman, Grote, Arnold, Thirlwall, Finlay, and Macaulay; followed by Kinglake, Helps, Froude, Buckle, Freeman, Goldwin Smith, Stubbs, and Gardiner; next come Seeley, J. R. Green, Lecky, Bryce, Sir George Trevelyan, and J. A. Symonds; after whom we are left with the contributors to *The Cambridge Modern History,* and to *The Political History of England.*

Parliamentary, forensic, pulpit, and platform oratory have declined at the same rate—a circumstance the more remarkable as one would expect every form of eloquence to be stimulated by a democratic environment; and journalism, as compared with what it was fifty, forty, or thirty years ago, shows a like decay.

Women have contributed so much to the best English literature that their emancipation and higher education might well have been looked to as opening fresh sources of power. If anything, the effect of their more favoured position has been

to stop the former supplies. Not only are the Sibylline books rapidly decreasing in number, but their contents are less interesting, and the price paid for them has risen.[1]

It was said twenty years ago that there was no man in the whole world under fifty one would cross the street to look at. Thus, whatever may be the causes of this decline in genius, they are common to all civilised mankind; only, as England used to be in a peculiar way the land of genius, they must have acted with exceptional energy among ourselves. In all probability these causes are no other than the tendencies already indicated as characteristic of our more recent history: the rise of a strong Government, the reform of abuses, the growth of democracy, the accumulation of wealth, the spread of education, the dissolution of theological beliefs. Let us see in what way they work.

It is a question whether Shelley was right when he said that to divide true love is not to take it away. One would have liked to hear Mary's opinion on the subject. At any rate, to divide intellect *is* to take it away. Now, merely to keep going, and periodically to renew, the huge administrative, legislative, military, and educational machinery of the modern State must absorb an enormous amount of intelligence and moral force, leaving so much the less available, so to speak, for play. Subjection, also, to such machinery involves a certain amount of steady drill, a uniformity of regulation by which genius is apt to be stifled.

[1] The accomplished historian of modern astronomy, Miss Agnes Clerke, was educated entirely at home.

When we hear that a Government office is a nest of singing birds we may conjecture, without listening, that the birds do not utter wood-notes wild.

Besides repressing originality and spontaneity among the higher intellects, popular education indirectly contributes to the same result by calling into existence a new public of inferior taste and less critical ability. Men of letters, and even men of science—not to mention politicians and preachers—lay themselves out to capture this new public by catering to its demands. At the same time, the number of candidates for popular favour being immensely multiplied by the diffusion of a facile culture, each competitor tries to draw attention to himself by sedulously cultivating what is called the personal note, which is more often than not a borrowed note strained out of recognition in a particular way. Now, the test of prose destined to become classical is that it can be read over and over again with increasing pleasure; whereas the oftener we read this prose of the spurious personal note, the more obvious does its meretricious character become. And the test of good poetry, as Leslie Stephen pointed out, is that it learns itself by heart, which is just what does not happen with poetry that is a jumble of outlandish vocables, painfully picked out of the dictionary, or of adjectives whose connection with their substantives amounts to a syntactical intrigue.

Men and women of ability are, by the sympathetic and communicative tendency of their nature, peculiarly susceptible to such far-fetched literary appeals; so that they sincerely admire the misdirection of talent, and point it out for the admiration

of the less gifted in the critical organs that they control. At the same time the increasing accumulation of wealth, with its inevitable accompaniment of increasing luxury, makes the production of paying—that is to say, artificial or morbid—literature an economic necessity. And men of science work under the same restraint. Once, like Agassiz, they had no time to make money. Perhaps in the near future they will have no time for anything else.

I have mentioned the removal of abuses and the destruction of false dogmas in progress for the last century as counting among influences unfavourable to genius. One is sorry to have to say this of such a necessary process; but I believe it will be found, on examination, that the fact is so. For these reforms, however salutary in other ways, tell also as the withdrawal of so much stimulation from that militant enthusiasm, that noble rage against cruelty and falsehood, which has ever been so large a constituent in the higher intellectual energisings of the past. Relative wrongness has been the negative electricity without which the positive electricity of their relative rightness could not exist. We know it from the confessions of genius. Shelley, with full adhesion, quotes Byron as saying that "most men are cradled into poetry by wrong." Newman tells the scholar who would reach "Love's high unruffled state," that he must "first learn him how to hate." Browning explains that Dante "loved well because he hated, hated wickedness that hinders loving." And even Matthew Arnold, who hated hatred itself, cries

out when confronted by an evil world: "Let me be keener to slay thee lest thou poison me!"

In accordance with this law, genius, where it still exists, is chiefly to be found among the collectivists or the anarchists to whom our whole society is hateful as an organised spoliation of the working classes; an organised defilement of the sexual relations; an organised and useless torture, inflicted under the name of justice, on those unhappiest victims whom we call the criminal classes.

It is no part of the historian's business to predict or to advise; and the present writer, at any rate, is not conscious of being qualified for either office. What has been said in this connection must therefore not be taken as expressing any approval of the views so brilliantly advocated in some contemporary novels and dramas. The sole point contended for is that literary genius, with few exceptions, has so far found its highest expression in a moral purpose, in the utterance of a protest against the propagation of falsehood or the practice of injustice, real or illusory, in fancy or in fact.

Perhaps a profounder analysis may show that the ethical motive is itself referable to a still more general law, and that the vital conditions of genius are furnished in the last resort by variety and contrast. Now, the general tendency of modern progress has been adverse to those conditions; it has made for assimilation and uniformity. English influence at its best has told for the extension of personal liberty and of representative government over the whole world; more equivocally, for the similar extension of English capitalist industry. At home Liberalism has always meant the extension

of rights and the removal of privileges. Our commercial legislation has decreed that no one industry shall be favoured at the expense of another, that the interest of the consumer shall not be sacrificed to the interest of the producer. Our criminal law has been reformed in the sense of proportioning punishment to crime. Our Factory Acts and Education Acts have given the children of the poor a position more like the position enjoyed by the children of the rich. Our social legislation tends towards giving the working classes the same immunity from disease and danger that is enjoyed by the middle and upper classes, or at any rate a money compensation for its loss. Sir William Harcourt's great Budget of 1894, by its identification of the succession duty on real and personal estate, marks a step in the same direction. It may be objected that, by progressively increasing the duty on large estates, Harcourt rather differentiated than assimilated the burden of taxation. But in reality this arrangement amounts to a more subtle kind of assimilation. For it proportions the tax, not to what has been inherited, but to what can be spared. And the same rule holds in reference to the system of exemptions and deductions observed in assessing small incomes for taxation.

Assimilation seems also to be the law of progressive religious thought in England. Evangelical pietism aimed at extending the field of religious obligation over the whole of life. Tractarianism tried to do the same thing more thoroughly by providing a more effective machinery for the purpose; by assimilating the Church of England, first to the primitive, and then to the mediæval, Church.

Since then, as a direct result of Anglican influence, there has followed the Modernist movement of our own time, which is simply an assimilation of Roman to Protestant principles on the lines of private judgment as distinguished from authority and tradition. Meanwhile, for over two centuries, the far broader methods of Rationalism have been working for the establishment of one uniform philosophy of existence, constructed on principles of pure reason, and tending towards the total exclusion of a supernatural world from any share in our interests or beliefs.

Genius of a high order has been required for carrying out some of these assimilations; but their total effect has been to abolish the conditions under which genius exists, just as the highest military abilities need war to bring them into activity, and are then thrown into the shade by the peace that they have helped to restore. It must, therefore, not be read as a sign of degeneration that genius among ourselves is no longer forthcoming in the same profusion as before. Whether it be, as some have tried to show, a morbid growth of the mind still remains uncertain; that it grows on morbid conditions seems an established fact. And one of these conditions is, over and above the existence of inequalities and contrasts, an erroneous appreciation of their values—a false estimate of their real extent, a false estimate of their importance for human happiness, a false estimate of the rapidity with which it is possible for human intellect and energy to replace them, when they are undesirable, by an improved state of things. Now, such an erroneous valuation is particularly stimulating to

genius. "Thy sorrow," exclaims Carlyle, "is the inverted image of thy nobleness; the depth of thy despair is the measure of thy capacity for hope!" But, unfortunately for genius, the tendency of advancing knowledge is to diminish both its sorrow and its hope. That we should have learned to appreciate the difficulties of reform as they never were appreciated before is only one aspect of the universal disillusionment our organised experience has brought about. And this decay of illusion must be counted among the causes to which the decline of genius is due. For illusion was the very air that it breathed—an illusive estimate of the evils to be overcome, and of the forces available for their overthrow; an illusive estimate of historical heroism, individual or collective, creating epics and dramas through all the past; illusive estimates of what the old religions had effected, leading to estimates equally illusive of what new religions or new sciences might also effect, creating Utopias in the future—these, in great measure, inspired the splendid imaginative and historical literatures, the vast philosophies, the glowing oratory, whose discontinuance we now deplore. Yet for our own clearer sense of reality we must also thank those children of light, the men of genius, less careful than the children of this world to secure the perpetuation of their race. For that very organisation of experience which has dispersed the mists of ignorance is their work; nor can its lessons be more impressively conveyed than in the warning given by Matthew Arnold, as the sum of Wordsworth's teaching, neither to make man too much a God, nor God too much a man.

INDEX

ABDUL AZIZ, Sultan, deposed and murdered, 405
Abdul Hamid, Sultan, character of, 405
Abdurrahman, Ameer of Afghanistan, 416
Abercromby, Sir Ralph, 53
Aberdeen, Earl of, his policy as Foreign Secretary, 251; Prime Minister, 258; resigns, 266
Achmet Aga, massacre ordered by, 406
Addington, *see* Sidmouth
Afghan War, first, 224; second, 415 *sq.*; frontier question, 447 *sq.*
Agnosticism, 329 *sq.*
Aix la Chapelle, Treaty of, 26; Congress of, 110
Alabama, escape of, 296; indemnity paid for her depredations, *ibid.*; arbitration, 376
Albert, Prince, his dynastic sympathies, 287; sides with the North in the American War, 295
Althorp, Lord, 169 *sq.*; 182
America, restrictions placed on trade and manufactures of, 27 *sq.*; Civil War in, 190 *sqq.*; its effect on English opinion, 291 *sqq.*, 297
Andrassy Note, 404
Anglican clergy, resistance of, to reform, 99 *sq.*
Anti-Corn-Law League, 210 *sqq.*
Anti-Militarism in Palmerston's time, 378
Apostolic Succession, 188
Apprentices, pauper, under the old Poor Law, 32 *sq.*
Appropriation Clause, 178 *sq.*; 353
Aristocracy, English, general mediocrity of, 8
Aristotle discovers the physiological division of labour, 309
Arkwright, inventor, 17
Army injured by the division of authority, 15; reorganised under Gladstone, 379 *sqq.*; abolition of purchase in, 380 *sqq.*; partial restoration of purchase in, 398
Arnold, Matthew, 306; contributes to liberal theology, 386; quoted, 493, 497
Arnold, Dr. Thomas, 120; his pupils at Oxford, 143; his schemes for Church union, 136; 194; 205
Ashley, Lord, *see* Shaftesbury, Seventh Earl of
Assimilation, tendency of modern progress towards, 494 *sqq.*
Austen, Jane, character of her early novels, 58 *sq.*; returns to literature under the Regency, 128
Austin, John, his *Province of Jurisprudence*, 142 *sqq.*; his opinion of Louis Napoleon, 256
Austria subsidised by Pitt, 53; declares war on Sardinia, 278; opposed to Turkey, 404

BACON, FRANCIS, 21; renewed zeal for his philosophy, 232

Bain, Alexander, 306; his explanation of reason, 314
Balfour, A. J., on faith and conduct, 430; Leader of the House of Commons, 467; his Education Bill, 469; Prime Minister, 473; his intellectual attitude, *ibid.*; resigns, 475
Balzac, H. de, recommends an absolute government for France, 256
Beaconsfield, Earl of, *see* Disraeli
Beesly, Prof. E. B., 351
Belgium threatened by French intrigues, 374; treaty for protection of, *ibid.*
Bell, Andrew, his system of mutual instruction, 86; a Tory favourite, 87
Bell, Sir Charles, discovers the distinction between sensory and motor nerves, 87 *sq.*
Benedetti, Count, French ambassador to Prussia in 1870, 373
Bentham, Jeremy, 17; a law reformer, 33 *sq.*; his political positivism, 40; 55; an atheist, 65; interests threatened by, 99; his scheme for secular education, 120; his rationalistic works, 120 *sq.*
Benthamites accept Malthus's ideas on poor-relief, 164; not pledged to *laissez-faire*, 170 *sqq.*; in favour of State education, 439
Bentinck, Lord George, Protectionist leader, 221 *sq.*
Bentinck, Lord William, Governor-General of Bengal, 160; of all India, 161; gives Sicily a free Constitution, 293
Berkeley, Bishop, 17, 18
Berlin, Congress of, 413
Birkbeck, George, founds Mechanics' Institutes, 203
Bismarck, Otto von, means adopted by, for German unification, 302 *sqq.*; provokes war with France, 371 *sqq.*
Black Sea Treaty rescinded, 375 *sq.*
Blake, William, sympathises with the French Revolution, 56; didactic tendencies in, 59
Bolingbroke (Henry St. John) preaches gospel of the Patriot King, 3; his intellectual eminence, 8, 17; debt of Disraeli to, 209
Bosnia, rebellion in, 402
Boswell, James, 18
Bowring, Sir John, provokes second Chinese War, 268
Boycotting, origin and extension of, 433 *sq.*
Boyle, Robert, 20
Bradlaugh, Charles, gives Secularism a more aggressive character, 327; elected for Northampton, 423; refused permission to affirm or to be sworn, 423 *sqq.*; carries Affirmation Bill, 425; treatment of, by the Irish Nationalists, 463
Bridgewater Treatises, 198
Bright, John, Free Trade orator, 222; opposed to the Crimean War, 263; unseated for opposing Chinese War, 269; his Reform campaign of 1858, 282 *sq.*; on the American Civil War, 300; calumny on, 300, *note*; supports Gladstone's Reform Bill, 340; for peasant proprietors in Ireland, 358; on English religion, 424; against Home Rule, 452 *sq.*
Brindley, James, 17
British Association founded, 198
British and Foreign School Society founded, 86
Broad Church intellectually superior to the Tractarians, 193; in the 'fifties, 321
Brontë, Charlotte, her *Jane Eyre* and *Villette*, 242, 306
Brontë, Emily, 242
Brougham, Henry, Edinburgh Reviewer, 82; his criticism of Thomas Young, 87; orders

Queen Caroline to return to England, 103; defends her before the House of Lords, 105; on the middle classes, 153, 154; Lord Chancellor, 155; his legal reforms, 159 *sq.*; on the Poor Law, 165; his educational proposals, 174 *sq.*; 203
Brown, Dr. Thomas, his treatise *On Cause and Effect*, 87
Browning, Elizabeth, her youthful studies, 125; converted to the gospel of human love, 242; 306
Browning, Robert, hopeful character of his early poetry, 240; glorifies love, *ibid.*; 306; religious opinions, 388; quoted, 493
Bruce (African explorer), 17
Buckingham and Chandos, Second Duke of, his obstructive policy, 219
Buckland, Frank, 198 *sq.*
Buckle, H. T., 306; his *History of Civilisation*, 316; helps to dispel theological prejudices, 317; reviews Mill's *Liberty*, *ibid.*; his attack on Mr. Justice Coleridge, 320
Buenos Ayres, unsuccessful expedition against, 76
Buffon, 20
Bulgaria, massacres in, 405 *sq.*; 411; 413
Buller, Charles, writes Lord Durham's Report, 162
Burdett, Sir Francis, 83
Bürger's *Lenore* translated, 56
Burghley, Lord, 8
Burke, Edmund, 8, 13, 17, 18; his attack on Warren Hastings, 29; opposes Parliamentary Reform, 39; on expediency and natural right, *ibid.*; reverence for established usage, 40; strong religious convictions, *ibid.*; as political prophet, 41; creates Conservative philosophy, 42; captures the Romantic movement for Conservatism, 42; provokes the French War, 51; on the English Deists, 65
Burke, T. H., murder of, 449
Burney, Fanny, 54
Burns, John, 475
Burrard, Sir Henry, 78
Bute, Earl of, 4
Butler, Bishop, bred a Dissenter, 17
Butt, Isaac, Home Rule leader, 428
Byron, Lord, first two Cantos of his *Childe Harold*, 88 *sq.*; his preference for Pope explained, 89; his speech on the Nottingham frame-breakers, 95; services to the Greek cause, 112 *sq.*; influence of Italy on, 125; might have been another Fox, 126

CAIRD, Prof. EDWARD, quoted, 245
Campbell, Sir Colin, suppresses Sepoy mutiny, 271
Campbell, Thomas, 121
Campbell-Bannerman, Sir Henry, vote of censure on, 467; Prime Minister, 474
Canada, government of, reformed, 162 *sq.*
Candahar annexed, 416; reunited to Afghanistan, *ibid.*
Canning, Charles Earl, Governor-General of India, 271
Canning, George, 8; defends the unreformed Parliament, 13; supports Catholic Emancipation, 75; his *Knife-Grinder*, 97; defeated by Perceval, 101; returns to office and supports repression, *ibid.*; opposed to the prosecution of Queen Caroline, 105; resigns, *ibid.*; Foreign Secretary, 106; head of European Liberalism, 107; protects South America, 110 *sq.*; suggests Monroe doctrine, 111; sends troops to Lisbon, *ibid.*; sympathises with

Greece, 113; Prime Minister, 114; his attitude towards Catholic Emancipation, 114, 116; admires Irving's preaching, 119; last struggles and death, 147; how his policy hastened Reform, 150; his argument against Reform, 155 *sq.*; separated from his natural supporters, 155; a Free Trader, 210
Canning, Stratford, *see* Stratford de Redcliffe
Cape Colony, 417
Capital punishment restricted, 159
Capitalism threatened after the Peace, 98 *sq.*
Cardwell, Edward, reorganises the Army, 379 *sqq.*
Carlile, Richard, prosecution and imprisonment of, 123 *sq.*; his *Address to Men of Science*, 124
Carlyle, Thomas, contributes to the *Edinburgh Review*, 82; his account of Jeffrey, *ibid.*; relation to German literature, 131; Rationalism, *ib.*; *Sartor Resartus*, *French Revolution*, and *Hero-Worship*, 201 *sq.*; on Chartism, 206; a sort of Radical, 239; vindicates Cromwell, 240; 306; against Darwin, 312; supports Governor Eyre, 338; on the Turk, 401; effect of his letter to the *Times*, 410 *sq.*; quoted, 326, 497
Carnarvon, Earl of, resigns on Eastern Question, 412; a convert to Home Rule, 455
Caroline of Brunswick, part played by in English politics, 103 *sq.*
Cash payments, suspension of, 95; resumed, 109
Cassels, Walter, 392
Castlereagh, Viscount, supports Catholic Emancipation, 75; sends Sir Arthur Wellesley to Portugal, 78; an efficient war administrator, 102; suicide of, 106; does not support Holy Alliance, 107; at Aix la Chapelle, 110
Catholic Emancipation, 52; attitude of English opinion towards, 114 *sqq.*; conceded by Wellington and Peel, 148; helps on Parliamentary reform, 150
Cattle plague of 1866, 339
Caucus, meaning of, 421
Cavagnari, Sir Louis, murdered, 416
Cavendish, Henry, 19, 21, 60
Cavendish, Lord F., murder of, 449
Cavour, Count, joins the alliance against Russia, 267; his meeting with Napoleon III. at Plombières, 277 *sq.*
Cecil, Lord Robert, *see* Salisbury, Marquess of
Chadwick, Edwin, Poor Law Commissioner, 167; chief author of the Report on Factory Labour, 170; on employers' liability, 170, 439; recommends restriction of drink traffic, 170; and compulsory education, 173
Chalmers, Thomas, 194, 198
Chamberlain, Joseph, introduces the caucus, 421; political position of in 1880, 422; leaves the Cabinet on Home Rule, 453; joins Lord Salisbury, 467; promotes Imperialism, 468; advocates Protection, 470 *sq.*
Chambers, Robert, author of the *Vestiges*, 238
Charity schools, 31
Charlotte, Princess, her death a blow to the power of the Crown, 103
Chartism, 205 *sqq.*; revival and final collapse of, 247
Chatham, William Pitt, First Earl of, 5, 6, 8, 17, 24; his Reform proposals, 38, 90; Second Earl of, 76

Chelmsford, Lord, his conduct of the Zulu War, 418 *sq.*
China, first (opium) war with, 224 *sq.*; second war with, 268 *sq.*; opium traffic with, legalised, 269
Chios, massacre of (1822), 109
Church of England in the eighteenth century, 16; religious tendencies of, 66; danger of provoking its opposition, 181
Church rates, a grievance of Nonconformists, 177; Bills to abolish, 298, 353
Churchill, Lord Randolph, attacks Bradlaugh, 429 *sq.*; his political position, tactics, and opinions, 430 *sq.*; Cabinet Minister, 450; Chancellor of the Exchequer, 454; resigns, *ibid.*
Cintra, Convention of, 79
Clarendon, Lord, supports Cavour at the Congress of Paris, 267
Clarke, Mrs., opens office for the private sale of commissions, 79
Classes and masses, 457
Clerkenwell explosion, 353
Clifford, Prof. W. K., his philosophy, 391
Clive, Robert Lord, 8, 17, 20
Clyde, Lord, *see* Campbell, Sir Colin
Cobbett, William, denounces Napoleon's despotism, 73; chief literary representative of the English reform party, 83; advocates currency reform, 107; his attitude towards democracy, 121; and freethought, 122; brings Paine's bones to England, *ibid.*; ablest representative of popular Radicalism, 134; advocates Catholic Emancipation, Free Trade, and Parliamentary Reform, 135; opposes the new Poor Law, 164, 167
Cobden, Richard, 8; his place in the Free Trade movement, 210 *sqq.*; supports Maynooth grant, 215; an unconditional Free Trader, 220 *sq.*; attacks Palmerston's Eastern policy, 226; opposed to the Crimean War, 263; and to the Chinese War, 268; loses his seat, 269; negotiates commercial treaty with France, 288
Coercion under Pitt, 49
Colenso, Bishop, criticises the Pentateuch, 325 *sq.*
Coleridge, Lord Chief Justice, on blasphemy prosecutions, 429
Coleridge, S. T., spy set on, 49; influence of the French Revolution on, 57; didactic tendency of his poetry, 59; practically agrees with Paine, 67; *Ode to France*, 71; on the state of the Universities in 1815–16, 84; attacks Lancaster's educational system, 87; *Lay Sermons*, 118; attitude towards German Biblical criticism, 124; attitude towards the Church of England, 132; supports Anglican dogmatism, 142; his idea of a church, 186
Colley, Sir George, 444
Collingwood, Lord, 54
Collins, William, 24, 55
Colonial Preference, 471
Colonies, Spanish-American, revolt of, 108
Combe, George, educationalist, 202
Common employment, doctrine of, abolished, 438
Commons, unreformed House of, 12
Commune, Paris, 377
Compensation for Disturbance Bill, 434
Compound Householder, 346 *sq.*
Compulsory education, results of, 440
Comte, Auguste, 40; his *Positive Philosophy*, 233;

welcomes the *Coup d'État*, 256; 307; proposes to revive excommunication, 433
Congress of Aix la Chapelle, 110; Berlin, 413; Paris, 267; Verona, 108
Congreve, Dr. Richard, 351
Conscience Clause, 361
Conservation of Energy, 236
Continental system, 92
Cook, Captain, 17
Coolies in South Africa, 473
Coote, Sir Eyre, 17
Corn Laws, arguments against and for, 212 *sq.*
Cotton famine, 300
Counties, Household Suffrage Bill, 440 *sqq.*
Cowper, Lord, plot to murder, 449
Cowper, William, 35, 55
Cowper-Temple Clause, 361
Cranmer, Archbishop, 8
Crete, insurrection in, 402
Crimea, expedition to, 264 *sqq.*
Cromwell, Oliver, 2, 8, 41, 202
Cromwell, Thomas, 8
Crown, power of, 2, 146 *sq.*
Cuvier, Georges, his theory of catastrophes, 199

DALHOUSIE, LORD, annexes Oudh, 270
Dalrymple, Sir Hew, 78
Dalton, John, his contributions to science, 60, 61
Darwin, Charles, his *Origin of Species*, 311; joins the Jamaica Committee, 338; his *Descent of Man*, 390
Darwin, Erasmus, his *Zoonomia*, 60; an atheist, 65; enunciates doctrine of evolution, 237
Davy, Sir H., his contributions to science, 60; decomposes the alkalis, 88; an obscurantist, 124
De Failly, Chassepot telegram of, 370
Democracy and freethought, 196 *sq.*
Denominational schools, inefficiency of, 362 *sq.*
De Quincey, Thomas, 201
Derby, Fourteenth Earl of, leaves Whig Ministry, 181, 219; succeeds Russell as Premier, 257; resigns, 258; succeeds Palmerston as Premier (1858), 277; against democracy, 282; on the Conservative Reform Bill, 348. —Fifteenth Earl of, prevents war in 1867, 369; refuses shelter to Cretan refugees, 402; opposes purchase of Suez Canal shares, 403; resigns on Eastern question, 412; against Home Rule, 452
Devonshire, Eighth Duke of, against Home Rule, 452; joins Lord Salisbury, 467
Dickens, Charles, attacks abuses, 241, 306
Disraeli, Benjamin, quoted, 145; sympathises with Chartism, 206, 208; apostle of Young England, 208 *sqq.*; on the condition of the agricultural poor, 214; attacks Peel, 215 *sq.*; takes office (1852), 257; declares for Free Trade, *ibid.*; resigns, 258; against Chinese War, 268; resumes office (1858), 281; introduces sham Reform Bill (1859), 283; sympathises with the slave-holders, 294, *note*; on free inquiry, 326; resumes office (1866), 344; his Reform Bill (1867), 346; accepts household suffrage, 347; educates his party, *ibid.*; Prime Minister, 353; resigns, 355; resumes Premiership, 384; guiding principles of his policy, 395; sanitary legislation, 400; copies Palmerston, 401; buys Suez Canal shares, 403 *sq.*; on the Bulgarian massacres, 406; character of his Eastern policy, 408 *sqq.*; at Berlin, 413; "Peace with Honour,"

414; on county householders, 440
Dissenters, concessions to, 176 *sq.*; support Irish Church Disestablishment, 334
Divorce Act, 299
Dudley, Earl, his impressions of Oxford in 1812, 84
Dumont, E., interpreter of Bentham, 18, 83
Duncan, Lord, 54
Durham, Lord, Governor-General of Canada, 162

EAST INDIA COMPANY, monopoly of, terminated, 160
Eaton, bookseller, pilloried for selling Paine's *Age of Reason*, 123
Ecclesiastical Titles Bill, 275
Edgeworth, Maria, a realist, 59; a Benthamite in morals, 90
Edinburgh, influence of, on English thought, 81
Edinburgh Review, foundation of, 82; supports Joseph Lancaster, 87
Education, Adam Smith's views on, 30 *sq.*; interest in, during the Napoleonic period, 84 *sqq.*; governing classes opposed to, in former times, 85; system of, proposed by the Benthamites, 174; first help given to, by the State, *ibid.*; interference of the clergy with, 175; unfavourably affected by Dissent, 176; Bill of 1870, 354 *sqq.*; of 1876, 398 *sq.*; of 1880, 439; of 1902, 469
Egypt, joint control in, 445; English conquest of, *ibid.*
Eichhorn's lectures attended by English students, 132
Eldon, Lord Chancellor, personifies Conservatism, 101; defends Test and Corporation Acts, 148
Eliot, George, 198; translates Strauss, 244; 306; her *Middlemarch*, 389; quoted, 433
Eloquence, decline of Parliamentary, 146; general decay of, 490
Employers' Liability Act (1880), 437 *sq.*
England, feeling against Russia in (1853–54), 260 *sqq.*
English intellect in the eighteenth century, 22; literature, decline of, *ibid.*; and of science, 19
Essays and Reviews, 322 *sqq.*
Evangelicalism, 25, 35, 65, 193
Evolutionism, history of, 307; theological objections to, 311 *sq.*—*See also under* Chambers, Darwin, Mill, Powell (Baden), and Spencer
Evolutionists on the Jamaica Committee, 338
Exhibition (Great) of 1851, 263
Eyre, E. J., his proceedings in Jamaica, 335 *sq.*; recalled, 337; escapes trial, 338

FACTORY ACT of 1802, 168; of 1816, *ibid.*; of 1833, 167 *sqq.*; subsequent legislation, 226 *sqq.*
Faraday, Michael, discoveries of, 236
Fashoda incident, 468 *sq.*
Fawcett, Henry, attacked as a Darwinian, 312; in Gladstone's Ministry, 423
Fenianism, 333
Fitzgerald, Edward, his translation of Omar Khayyám, 388 *sq.*
Fitzwilliam, Earl, 75
Foote, G. W., his definition of Secularism, 245; prosecution and imprisonment of, 426 *sq.*
Forster, W. E., his Education Bill, 360 *sq.*; Irish Secretary, 449; resigns, *ibid.*
Fourth Party, 429
Fox, C. J., his coalition with North, 5; India Bill, *ibid.*; number of his personal following, 7; without religious belief, 66

Fox, W. J., Anti-Corn Law orator, 222; unseated for opposing Chinese War, 269
Frame-breaking, 94 *sq.*
France, progress of, after the Revolution, 42; puts down Spanish liberty, 110
Franchise, County, in the Reform Bill, 158 *sq.*; rating and rental, 346
Free Church of Scotland, 194
Freethought in the later eighteenth century, 65
Free Trade, history of, 210 *sqq.*; in relation to the price of corn, 221; attitude of the religious bodies towards, 222
Frere, Sir Bartle, author of Zulu War, 418
Frost, John, prosecution of, 48
Froude, Hurrell, place of in the Tractarian movement, 190, 202
Froude, J. A., his *Nemesis of Faith*, 243, 306; supports Governor Eyre, 338; driven from Oxford for heterodoxy, 487; his place among English historians, 490

GAMBLING, increase of, 488
Garibaldi, Sicilian expedition of, 286; Roman expedition of (1867), 369 *sq.*
General Election of 1784, 5; of 1830, 149; of 1831, 156; of 1834, 182; of 1841, 183; of 1852, 257; of 1857, 269; of 1859, 283; of 1865, 332; of 1868, 354; of 1874, 383; of 1880, 420 *sq.*; of 1885, 442, 450; of 1886, 454; of 1892, 465; of 1895, 468; of 1900, 460; of 1906, 475 *sq.*
Genius, general decay of, in modern England, 489 *sqq.*
George III., influence of his mother on, 3; personal power of, 3 *sqq.*; his accession amounts to a second Stuart Restoration, 4; backed by the people, 13; patronises Sir W. Herschel, 21, 40; supports the Slave Trade, 50; condones Irish atrocities, 52; opposes supersession of the Duke of York, 53; prevents coalition between Pitt and Fox, 73; admits the Whigs to office, *ibid.*; prevents Catholic Emancipation, 74, 115; popular during the war, 97; personal piety of, 119
George IV., his character as Prince of Wales, 7; (as Regent) negotiates with the Whig leaders, 73, 115; restores his brother to the command-in-chief, 80; brings contempt on royalty, 98, 103; (as King) tries to divorce his wife, 104; accepts Catholic Emancipation, 148; makes the Monarchy contemptible, *ibid.*
Gibbon, E., 17, 18, 65
Gibson, Milner, unseated for opposing Chinese War, 269
Gilbert's Act, 62
Gladstone, W. E., 8; 154; in Peel's Cabinet, 219; Chancellor of the Exchequer under Aberdeen, 258; associated with Aberdeen's peace principles, 263; secedes from Palmerston's Ministry, 266; his pamphlet on Neapolitan dungeons, *ibid.*; against Chinese War, 268; Chancellor of the Exchequer under Palmerston, 284; sides with the Southern States, 294; declares for Parliamentary Reform, 304; praises *Ecce Homo*, 331; his Reform Bill, 340; great popularity of after his fall in 1866, 344; his Irish Church Resolutions, 353; Prime Minister, 355; his attitude towards Trade Union legislation, 367; loses popularity, 382; resigns, 383; on *Bulgarian Horrors*, 406; effect of his speeches on public opinion, 420; second Ministry,

423; passes household suffrage in the counties, 441 *sq.*; his services to Montenegro and Greece, 443; defeat and resignation (1885), 450; returns to office, 452; his Home Rule Bill, 453; on the classes and the masses, 457; appeals to the historians, *ibid.*; his last Ministry (1892), 466; resigns from failing health, 467
Goderich, Lord, Chancellor of the Exchequer, 106; Prime Minister, 147
Godwin, W., his *Political Justice*, 38; on the improved state of Europe in 1812, 85
Goethe, quoted, 489
Gordon, General Charles, career and death of, 449
Gordon, G. W., hanged, 336
Gorst, Sir John, member of the Fourth Party, 429
Goschen, Viscount, against Home Rule, 452; chief contributor to the Unionist victory, 454; Chancellor of the Exchequer, *ibid.*; his services as First Lord of the Admiralty, *ibid.*
Graham, Sir James, leaves the Whig Ministry, 181; his Education Bill, 229 *sq.*
Gramont, Duc de, proposes seizure of Belgium, 374
Gray, Thomas, 24, 55
Greece, general enthusiasm for, 111 *sq.*; service done by Gladstone to, 443
Green, J. R., on the clergy and education, 393 *sq.*; his place among English historians, 490
Greenwood, Fr., advises purchase of Suez Canal shares, 403
Greg, W. R., his *Creed of Christendom*, 244
Grenville, Lord, supports Catholic claims, 75
Greville, Charles, quoted, 269
Grey, Second Earl, succeeds Wellington as Prime Minister, 155; character of his Government, *ibid.*; retirement of, 181; *see* Reform Bill
Grey, Third Earl, 218 *sq.*, 222
Grote, George, his opinion of James Mill, 83; collaborates with Bentham, 121; seconds Roebuck's proposals for State education, 174; his *History of Greece*, 241; 306; place among English historians, 490
Grove, Sir W., his lectures on the *Correlation of the Physical Forces*, 237
Guizot, F., peace policy of, 252

HALLAM, H., his *Constitutional History*, 130; place among English historians, 490
Hamilton, Sir W., Mill's *Examination of*, 337
Hampden, R. D., appointed Regius Professor of Divinity at Oxford, 193; Bishop of Hereford, 194
Harcourt, Sir W., effect of his speeches on public opinion, 420; superseded by Lord Rosebery, 467; introduces Local Veto Bill, 468; his Budget of 1894, 495
Hardy, Thomas, 389
Hare, Archdeacon Julius, 133, 193
Hares and Rabbits Bill, 436
Harrison, Frederic, on *Essays and Reviews*, 323; on Jamaica Committee, 338; member of the Trade Union Commission, 351; his advice to working men, 352; drafts Trade Union Bill, 365
Harrowby, Earl of, carries Bill for Church reform, 100
Hartington, Marquess of, *see* Devonshire, Duke of
Hastings, Warren, 8, 17, 20; impeachment of, 29
Havelock, Sir Henry, hero of the Indian Mutiny, 271 *sq.*
Hazlitt, W., 128

Hegel, part played by his philosophy in Britain, 487
Heine, H., his opinion of Canning quoted, 107
Hemans, Felicia, 125
Hennell, Charles, 197 *sq.*
Herschel, Sir John, his *Discourse on the Study of Natural Philosophy*, 232
Herschel, Sir William, 19, 21
Hicks Pasha, defeat and death of, 446
High Church party support Irish Church Disestablishment, 334
Historians on Home Rule, 458
Historians, modern, exhibit a descending scale of genius, 490
Hobbes, Thomas, his *Leviathan*, 143
Hobhouse, J. C., introduces Factory Bill, 169
Holy Alliance, the, 108
Holyoake, G. J., trial and imprisonment of, for blasphemy, 245; founds Secularism, *ibid.*; his *Trial of Theism*, 246; in praise of Buckle, 320; character of his teaching, 327
Home Rule Bill of 1886, 453 *sq.*; of 1893, 466; arguments for and against, 455 *sqq.*
Home Rule party, 383, 428, 429
Hoods, the, 54
Horner, Francis, contributes to *Edinburgh Review*, 82; death of, 106
Household suffrage in boroughs, 347; in counties, 440 *sqq.*
Howard, John, 17
Howe, Lord, 54
Hughes, T., his argument for Reform, 343; helps to conduct the Trade Union case, 351
Humboldt, W. von, his political theories, 38
Hume, David, 17, 18, 65
Hume, Joseph, passes an economical reform, 105
Hungary, Russian intervention in, 261
Huskisson, W., supports Protectionist legislation, 101; President of the Board of Trade, 106; initiates Free Trade measures, *ibid.*
Huxley, T. H., his encounter with Bishop Wilberforce, 312; invents the word "Agnosticism," 329; on Jamaica Committee, 338; on animal automatism, 390
Hyde Park railings, 345

ILLUSION a condition of genius, 496 *sq.*
Imperialism becomes a national interest, 468
India, treatment of, by England in the eighteenth century, 28 *sq.*; government of, reformed in 1833, 160 *sq.*; mutiny of the Bengal Army in, 269 *sqq.*; government of, transferred to the Crown, 272; influence of, on England, 272 *sq.*; gives the key to English foreign policy, 444 *sq.*
Individuality favoured by weak government, 17
Industrial revolution connected with the Napoleonic War, 90 *sqq.*
Intellectuals on Home Rule, 458
"International Association," the, 377
Ireland, men of letters produced by in the eighteenth century, 18; industries of, suppressed, 28; rebellion of, 1798, 52; union with, carried by promises to Roman Catholics, 74; grievances of her Catholic population, 177 *sq.*; Earl Grey's measures for dealing with Church temporalities in, 178 *sq.*; famine in, 216 *sqq.*; land system of, 217 *sq.*; Protestant Church of, 333 *sq.*, disestablished and disendowed, 355 *sq.*; Land Act of 1870, 358; University Bill of 1873, 382; renewed agitation

in, 420; agrarian movement in, 432; Land Act of 1881, 434 *sqq.*—*See also* Home Rule
Irving, Ed., preaches the Second Advent, 119; founds Apostolic Church, 186
Isandhlwana, Battle of, *see* Chelmsford, Lord
Ismail Pasha, Khedive of Egypt, 403; deposed, 445
Italy, influence of, on English poetry, 125; English sympathy with, 273; affects the General Election of 1859, 283; liberation of, 285 *sq.*

JAMAICA, insurrection, 335 *sq.*; Committee, 337 *sq.*
James, Sir Henry (Lord James of Hereford), against Home Rule, 452; joins Lord Salisbury, 467
Japan, 469, 487
Jeffrey, F., edits *Edinburgh Review*, 82; policy of, *ibid.*; on state of the people in 1809, 85
Jervis, Lord, 54
Jews admitted to Parliament, 298
Johnson, Samuel, 17, 18
Joule, J. P., determines the mechanical equivalent of heat, 237
Jowett, B., 193, 306; Greek Professor, 322; contributes to *Essays and Reviews*, 323
Juarez, President, 368

KEATS, J., Hellenism of, 126; gives promise of practical genius, 127
Keble, J., 70; his *Christian Year*, 185; assize sermon, 187 *sq.*; dreads Biblical criticism, 210; supports Gladstone's Irish Church policy, 334
Kingsley, C., Liberal Churchman, 193; disciple of Maurice, 321; supports Governor Eyre, 338

Laissez-faire, 33; connection of, with Bentham's school, 34
Lamb, Charles, 128
Lamb, William, *see* Melbourne, Lord
Lancaster, J., his educational scheme, 86
Landor, W. S., born to be a revolutionary leader, 127
Lanyon, Sir Owen, on the Boers, 443 *sq.*
Lardner, N., Paley's debt to, 17
Law, condition of, under the unreformed Parliament, 16, 154
Law, W., 17, 70
Lawrence, John Lord, saves the Punjaub, 271
Lawrence, Sir William, reported attacks on religion in his lectures, 124
Lebanon massacres, 401 *sq.*
Lecky, W. E. H., his *History of Rationalism*, 330; his place among English historians, 490
Lewes, G. H., 351
Lewis, Sir G. C., on the American War, 294
Lewis, M., his interest in German literature, 56
Liberalism, political, reaction against after Waterloo, 97; speculative, periodic law of, 385
Liberals, factory legislation carried by, 228
Liberty, political, double meaning of, 1; enjoyed by England before the French Revolution, 2; gains by increased power of the State, 486
Lightfoot, Bishop, on *Supernatural Religion*, 392
Lincoln, A., President of the United States, 289; upholds the Union, 290; promotes the ablest generals, 297; quoted, 301
Lincoln, Lord, Irish Secretary under Peel, 219
Literature, flourishes in periods of political reaction, 239;

early Victorian, character of, 481; decline of, during the last century, 489
Liverpool, Earl of, 101
Locke, J., organises the tradition of English liberty, 30, 143
Londonderry, Second Marquess of, *see* Castlereagh, Viscount. —Third Marquess of, his wrecking amendment to Collieries Bill, 227
Louis Napoleon, *see* Napoleon III.
Louis Philippe, a *bourgeois* King, 149; peace policy of, 252 *sq.*; fall of, 254
Lowe, R. (Lord Sherbrooke), against Parliamentary Reform, 337 *sq.*; his Revised Code, 359; Chancellor of the Exchequer, 360; injures elementary teaching, 360 *note*
Lushington Judgment, the, 387
Lyell, Sir Charles, his *Principles of Geology*, 200; on social intolerance, 244; his attitude towards Darwinism, 312
Lytton, First Lord (Edward Bulwer), literary character of his *Pelham*, 201; First Earl of, his policy as Viceroy of India, 414 *sqq.*

MACAULAY, LORD, contributes to *Edinburgh Review*, 82; advanced Liberalism of his earlier Essays, 130; his review of James Mill, 140; in the Parliament of 1830, 154; a member of the Supreme Council, 161; reforms Hindoo education, *ibid.*; constructs Indian Penal Code, *ibid.*, 201; speech against Chartism, 206 *sq.*; supports Maynooth grant, 215; to some extent a Radical, 239; his *History of England*, 241; proposes opening Indian Civil Service to competitive examination, 272; 306; his place among English historians, 420; quoted, 54, 61, 150, 154
McCulloch, J. R., supports factory legislation, 169
Mackintosh, Sir James, his reply to Burke, 43; joins the reactionary side, 44; his political philosophy, 44 *sq.*; his religious belief, 65 *sq.*; advocates criminal law reform, 106 *sq.*
Magee, Archbishop, quoted, 468
Mahdi heads revolt of the Sudan, 446
Maine, Sir H. S., on Dickens and Thackeray, 241, 306
Maiwand, Battle of, 416
Majuba Hill, Battle of, 444
Malt tax repealed, 436
Malthus, T., his *Essay on Population*, 62 *sq.*; approves of factory legislation, 169; his theory applied to biology, 310 *sq.*
Manchester murder (1867), 352 *sq.*
Mansel, H. L., answered by Mill, 337
Marsh, Bishop Herbert, supports sectarian education, 87; translates Michaelis, 132
Martineau, Harriet, sympathises with Chartism, 206; her leaders in the *Daily News*, 294, 351
Martineau, James, contributes to liberal theology, 320 *sq.*
Materialism, two meanings of, 487 *sq.*; in modern society, 488
Maurice, F. D., 193; founds Christian Socialism, 247 *sqq.*, 306; on future punishment, 321
Maximilian, Emperor, execution of, 368
Mazzini's letters opened at the Foreign Office, 251
Melbourne, Viscount, studies at Glasgow, 81; on Catholic Emancipation, 179; succeeds Earl Grey, 181 *sq.*; resigns, 182; recalled to office, *ibid.*;

resigns again and returns to office on the Bedchamber question, 183; finally defeated at the General Election, *ibid.*; forces Hampden on Oxford, 193 *sq.*; believes in Protection, 222
Mentana, Battle of, 370
Meredith, George, 389
Methodism, 16, 24 *sq.*, 66
Middle classes raised to power by the Reform Act of 1832, 152 *sq.*; their opinion of themselves, 213 *sq.*; disposed to confide in the aristocracy, 280
Mill, James, founder of English philosophical Radicalism, 83; his influence on Bentham, *ibid.*; general services to utilitarianism, *ibid.*; on the middle classes, 132; his intellectual eminence, 134; *History of British India*, 138; *Essay on Government*, 139 *sq.*; *Analysis of the Phenomena of the Human Mind*, 140 *sq.*; his plan for Church reform, 186
Mill, J. S., on the Tory view of Greek history, 112; on Colonial self-government, 163; 201; his debt to Whewell, 232; *System of Logic*, 234; *Principles of Political Economy*, 246; competitive examination system for India adopted at his recommendation, 272; on Conservative stupidity, 280; foretells victory of the North, 293; 306; 307; *On Liberty*, 318 *sq.*; against State-appointed religious teaching, 319; Chairman of Jamaica Committee, 337; his *Examination of Hamilton's Philosophy*, *ibid.*; on Auguste Comte, *ibid.*; Member for Westminster, *ibid.*; on Eyre's case, 338 *sq.*; his speech on the cattle plague, 339; supports Gladstone's Reform Bill, 340; on Wages Fund, 342; prevents a conflict between the people and the soldiers, 345; defeated at Westminster (1868), 354; proposes paying off the National Debt, *ibid.*; his pamphlet on *England and Ireland*, 358; his proposal for the prevention of the Franco-German War, 375; subscribes to Bradlaugh's election expenses, 387; *Essay on Theism*, 235 *note*, 390 *sq.*
Milman, Dean, his *History of the Jews*, 133; 193; *History of Christianity*, 197
Missionary activity, 119
Mitford's *History of Greece*, 112
Mohr discovers conservation of energy, 237
Molesworth, Sir W., gives Roman Catholics a share in the Education Grant, 230
Mommsen, Th., on Lord Beaconsfield, 414
Montalembert, Comte de, prophetic speech of, 267
Montenegro, 408
Montesquieu on English liberty 1, 41
Moore, Sir John, 53
Moore, Thomas, his *Irish Melodies*, 89
Morley, J., on education, 363
Morpeth, Lord, introduces Factory Bill, 169
Morrill Tariff, 293
Morris, W., his *News from Nowhere*, 38
Mundella, A. J., 365, 366; his Education Act, 439
Municipal reform, 163 *sq.*
Murchison, Sir Roderick, supports Governor Eyre, 338

NAPLES, revolution in (1820), 109
Napoleon Bonaparte, meaning of England's war with, 71; economic interpretation of his career, 91 *sq.*; prophecies referred to, 115

Napoleon III., elected President of the French Republic, 255; makes himself absolute, *ibid.*; guiding principle of his policy, 258; quarrels with the Czar, 259; author of the Vienna Note, 260; probably a tool of Palmerston, 263; his life attempted, 276; makes secret agreement with Cavour, 277 *sq.*; frees Lombardy, 285; his subsequent policy towards Italy, 287; Free Trade measures, 288; outwitted by Bismarck, 367 *sq.*; sets up a Mexican empire, 368; fails to obtain Luxemburg, 369; makes concessions to Liberal opinion, 370
National Society founded, 86
Natural selection, 311
Nature, idea of, in literature, 23
Navarino, Battle of, 114, 147
Navy, why better administered than Army, 15
Neapolitan dungeons, 266
Nelson, 53 *sq.*; annihilates France's sea power, 76
Newcastle, Fourth Duke of, unseats Gladstone, 219
Newman, F. W., his *Phases of Faith*, 244
Newman, J. H., Cardinal, 70; his religious position, 189 *sq.*; submits to Rome, 192; quoted, 493
New Orleans, expedition to, 76
Newton, Sir Isaac, 20, 21
Niebuhr, B., influences English thought, 133
Northcote, Sir Stafford, institutes Sinking Fund, 390; opposes purchase of Suez Canal shares, 403
Novelists, early Victorian, religious tone of, 389

OASTLER, Richard, the first to protest against child-labour, 169
O'Connell, Daniel, organises Irish opinion, 116; his Repeal agitation, 180; complains of Liberal infidelity, *ibid.*
Oligarchy, incapable administration of, in the Napoleonic War, 76
Opium War, *see* China
Orange Free State, 417
Oratory, general decline of, 490
Order not maintained by the unreformed Government, 14
Orders in Council, 92
Orsini attempts to assassinate Napoleon III., 276
Owen, Sir Richard, attacks Darwin, 311
Owen, Robert, his proposals for the regeneration of mankind, 204 *sq.*; 246
Oxford in 1812, 84; after Newman's secession, 243

PACKENHAM, GENERAL, failure of, at New Orleans, 76
Paine, T., his *Rights of Man*, 45; *Common Sense*, 46; definition of government, *ibid.*; proposes old-age pensions, 49; and universal education, *ibid.*; outlawed, 48; his *Age of Reason*, 66 *sq.*, 120, 196
Paley, W., 17; on the equal diffusion of happiness, 63; his *Evidences of Christianity*, 68
Palmerston, Viscount, a pupil of Dugald Stewart, 81; 219; 222; his foreign policy in the 'thirties, 223 *sq.*; succeeds Aberdeen at the Foreign Office, 251; compared with Canning, 252; his diplomatic victory over France, *ibid.*; supports constitutional government in Italy, 254 *sq.*; dismissed from office, 257; defeats Russell on the Militia Bill, *ibid.*; represents the English feeling against Russia, 260 *sqq.*; probably influences Napoleon III., 263; defends Bowring, 268; wins the General Election of 1857,

269; his answer to the Edinburgh Presbytery, 275; defeated on the Conspiracy Bill, 299; resigns, *ibid.*; succeeds Derby in 1859, 284; supports Italian independence, 287; keeps up England's fighting strength, 288; sympathises with the South, 294; passes Divorce Act, 299; his Danish policy, 303; death of, 336; opposes construction of Suez Canal, 403; his policy contrasted with Disraeli's, 409
Palmerstonian period of English intellectual development, 305 *sq.*
Papacy, prophecies applied to, 115; anti-liberal policy of, 394
Papal aggression, 273 *sqq.*
Paper duty, repeal of, 299
Parliamentary representation before 1832, 11 *sq.*; after 1832, 278
Parnell, C. S., character and success of, 428 *sq.*; imprisoned and released, 448; acquitted of forged charges, 465; implicated in a divorce suit, *ibid.*; deposed from leadership of Irish party, *ibid.*; death of, *ibid.*
Parochial relief, old system of, 31 *sq.*
Passive resistance, 470
Peace with France, immediate effects of, 96
"Peace with Honour," 414
Peel, the first Sir Robert, introduces Factory Bill of 1816, 168
Peel, second Sir Robert, 8; Home Secretary, 106; takes up Criminal Law reform, 107; reforms the currency, *ibid.*; concedes Catholic emancipation, 116; associated with Wellington, 149; separated from his natural supporters, 155; opposes Earl Grey's Reform Bill, 157 *sq.*; supports municipal reform, 164; his career hampered by Court influence, 182 *sq.*, 184; his first Budget, 215; converted to Free Trade, 215, 218; augments Maynooth grant, 218; his last Budget, 219 *sqq.*; on Fair Trade, 220; his defeat and resignation, 221 *sq.*
Peloponnesus, rising in (1821), 109
Penjdeh affair, 447 *sq.*
Perceval, Spencer, his proposals for Church reform defeated, 100; Premier, 101; a strict observer of religious duties, 117
Persian War (1857), 268
Peterloo, Massacre of; *see* St. Peter's Fields
Petty, Lord Henry, a pupil of Dugald Stewart, 81
Philosophy, English, before the French Revolution, 55
Phœnix Park murders, 449
Physiocrats, the, 210
Pitt, William, the elder, *see* Chatham
Pitt, William, the younger, number of his personal following, 7; 30; his reform proposals, 38; 49; first supports abolition of Slave Trade, 50; but afterwards abandons it, 50 *sq.*; opposes war with France, 51; hostility to Jacobinism, *ibid.*; condones Irish atrocities, 52; an enemy of liberty, *ibid.*; removes Duke of York from command, 53; effect of his war expenditure, 61 *sq.*; religious opinions, 66
Place, Francis, helps to pass the Reform Bill, 158; aids repeal of laws against strikes, 341
Plato a Free Trader, 310
Plimsoll, S., the sailor's friend, 397
Poerio, Carlo, 266
Poetry, decay of, before the French Revolution, 54
Poland, partitionment of, 53; remonstrances on behalf of, 301

Ponsonby, George, death of, 106
Poor Law, New, 164 *sqq.*
Portland, Duke of, his administration of the Home Office, 103
Portugal, revolution in, 109
Positivists, English, support Trade Unionism, 350
Post Office reform, 175
Poverty in the early Victorian period, 203
Powell, Prof. Baden, supports evolution, 308; his *Order of Nature*, 322; on miracles, *ibid.*; contributes to *Essays and Reviews*, *ibid.*; his death, 324
Price, Dr., compares the English and French Revolutions, 39
Priestley, J., 19, 21, 60, 124
Prim, General, 371
Prince Imperial killed by the Zulus, 419
Property qualification abolished, 299
Protection, mischief done by, in 1814, 95
Prussia subsidised by Pitt, 53; *see* Bismarck
Public Worship Regulation Bill, 395
Purchase of commissions abolished, 380 *sqq.*
Pusey, E. B., his place in the Tractarian movement, 190; on Biblical infallibility and eternal punishment, 325

QUAKERS begin agitation against Slave Trade, 25
Quarterly Review founded, 82; supports Bell against Lancaster, 89; vilifies Athenian and American republics, 112

RADCLIFFE, ANN, her romances, 56, 58
Radicalism, English, its connection with the French Revolution, 37; tends to become identified with a peace policy, 223
Rationalism after the Peace, 120 *sqq.*, 196; implications of, 330; tends towards a uniform philosophy of existence, 496
Reade, Charles, 306, 389
Reform agitation in Scotland suppressed, 49 *sq.*; in England (1866), 344 *sqq.*
Reform Bills of 1831–32, 156 *sqq.*; 1859, 283; 1860, 298; 1866, 340; 1867, 346; 1884, 441 *sq.*
Reformation, the English, 191
Regency debates of 1788, 6
Regency, the, gave a literary direction to English genius, 127 *sqq.*
Religious movement after 1814, 184 *sq.*
Rent, theory of, 135 *sq.*
Republic, French, of 1848, causes of its ruin, 255
Retaliation in trade, 474
Revolution, French, of 1789, its immediate effect on English thought, 37; of 1830, 149; of 1848, 254; of 1870, 375
Ricardo, David, his *Principles of Political Economy*, 134; applications of the theory of Rent, 135 *sq.*; theory of Cost of Production, 137; theory of Foreign Exchanges, *ibid.*
Richmond, Third Duke of, his Reform Bill, 38; Fifth Duke of, his obstructive policy, 219
Ritualism, spread of, 354
Roberts, Lord, in Afghanistan, 416
Robertson, F. W., 193, 391
Robinson, F., *see* Goderich, Lord
Roebuck, J. A., proposes a system of secular State education, 174
Rogers, Prof. Thorold, on boycotting, 434
Romanes, G. J., his criticism on Mill, 391
Romanticism in the eighteenth century, 24, 55; in politics, 43
Romilly, Sir Samuel, a deist, 65; advocates Criminal Law reform, 106; suicide of, *ibid.*

Rose, H. J., his lectures on German Protestantism, 187
Rosebery, Earl of, Prime Minister, 467, 476
Roumania, insurrectionary movement in (1821), 109
Rousseau, J. J., 37 *sq.*
Royal Institution founded, 60
Rumford, Count, 62
Ruskin, John, 248 *sqq.*, 306; supports Governor Eyre, 338
Russell, John Earl, a pupil of Dugald Stewart, 81; obtains repeal of Test and Corporation Acts, 148; adopts Brougham's education proposals, 175; revives Appropriation Clause, 179; reforms ecclesiastical abuses, 195; declares for Free Trade, 218; succeeds Peel, 222; defeat and resignation of, 257; belongs to the war party in Aberdeen's Cabinet, 260; against Chinese War, 268; his Durham letter, 275; opposes Conspiracy Bill, 277; his abortive Reform Bills, 281; moves rejection of Disraeli's Reform Bill, 283; supports Italian independence, 284, 287; on the American War, 294, 299; his share in the *Alabama* affair, 296; on the Polish question, 301; Prime Minister (1865–66), 336; sympathises with the Herzegovinians, 409
Russell, Sir William, exposes official mismanagement in the *Times*, 265
Russia, war between the Western Powers and, 259 *sqq.*; war between Turkey and (1877), 411; defeated by Japan, 469

SADLER, MICHAEL, brings the subject of child-labour before Parliament, 169
St. Peter's Fields, meeting and bloodshed at, 102
Salisbury, Robert Cecil, Marquess of, on Disraeli's Reform Bill, 348; drives Lowe from office, 360; Foreign Secretary, 412; makes secret treaty with Russia, 413; Prime Minister (1885), 450; (1886), 454; (1895), 467
San Stefano, Treaty of, 412
Schleswig-Holstein question, 301 *sqq.*
Schuvaloff, Count, 413
Science, English, before the French Revolution, 55; difference between English and French, 62; American, debt of England to, *ibid.*; how opposed to theology, 196; recent, exhibits little genius, 489
Scinde, unjust war against, 229
Scott, Sir Walter, first awakening of his genius, 56; secedes from *Edinburgh Review*, 82; character of his metrical romances, 88; might have been a soldier-statesman, 126; character of, by himself, 129
Sebastopol, siege and capture of, 265
Secession, American, case for English sympathy with, 291
Secularism defined, 245
Sedgwick, Adam, 198
Seeley, Sir John, his *Ecce Homo*, 331
Selborne, Lord, against Home Rule, 452
Sepoy mutiny, 269 *sqq.*
Servia makes war on Turkey (1876), 408
Seymour, Lord Webb, a pupil of Dugald Stewart, 81
Shaftesbury, Seventh Earl of, his place in factory legislation, 169; on the Opium War, 225 *sq.*; opposed by Conservatives, 227; his Collieries Bill, *ibid.*; supported by Radical and Irish members, 228; accepts Corn Law repeal, *ibid.*; on the imperfect philanthropy of religionists,

229; favours sectarian education, 229 *sq.*; intolerant to Roman Catholics, 230; on the tyranny of professors, 326; on *Ecce Homo*, 331
Sheffield outrages, 349
Shelburne, Lord, 21; a Free Trader, 210
Shelley, P. B., an enthusiast for Greece, 112; influenced by Italy, 125; imitates Southey, 126; his scientific and practical tastes, 126 *sq.*; quoted, 211, 491, 493
Shepstone, Sir H., annexes Transvaal, 418
Shere Ali, 415
Sidmouth, Viscount, as Home Secretary, 102
Sinking Fund, Stafford Northcote's, 399
Slave Trade, 25 *sqq.*; reaction in favour of, 50; abolished by the Whigs, 73
Slavery, West Indian, agitation against, 100; abolished, 159; causes American Civil War, 289
Smith, Adam, 18; his economic theory, 29 *sqq.*
Smith, Prof. Goldwin, on the Jamaica Committee, 338; on the Turks, 402; against Home Rule, 458; his place among English historians, 490
Smith, Sydney, contributes to the *Edinburgh Review*, 82
Smith, William, his services to geology, 60
Somerville, Mrs., preached against, 201
Southey, Robert, Tory and High Churchman, 117; influence of, on English poetry, 126
Sovereignty, idea of, 143
Spain, revolution in (1820), 109
Spencer, Herbert, his Essay on Progress, 310; on survival of the fittest, 311; on the nature of reason, 313; treats evolution as a process of education, 314; opposed to State interference, 315; his *First Principles*, 328; his reconciliation of religion and science, 328 *sq.*; on Jamaica Committee, 338; quoted, *ibid.*; upholds the individual against the State, 485
Spencer, Rev. Thomas, 222
Stanley, Dean, 193; on *Essays and Reviews*, 323 *sq.*
Stanley, *see* Derby, Earls of
State, the, and sanitary legislation, 172 *sq.*
State-interference and political economy, 435
Stephen, Sir James, Edinburgh Reviewer, 82
Stephen, Sir Leslie, 338; on good poetry, 492
Sterling, John, influenced by Strauss, 243
Stewart, Dugald, his influence as an educator, 81
Stratford de Redcliffe, Lord, sent on special mission to Constantinople, 259
Strauss, David, influence of his *Life of Jesus*, 243
Strikes, law against, 93 *sq.*; increase of, after 1857, 342; how viewed by "Society," *ibid.*
Sudan, revolt of, 446; reconquered, 468
Suez Canal shares purchased, 403
Suttee put down by Bentinck, 160
Sutton, Archbishop Manners, opposes Bill for popular education, 86
Swift, Dean, his contempt for physical science, 21
Swinburne, A. C., his opinion of Louis Napoleon, 256; 306; an anti-theistic poet, 388; his *Ode on the Insurrection in Crete*, 402
Symonds, J. A., his place among English historians, 490

TAYLOR, WILLIAM, of Norwich, 56

Tel-el-Kebir, Battle of, *see* Wolseley
Temple, Archbishop, contributes to *Essays and Reviews*, 323
Tennyson, Alfred Lord, earlier poems of, 201; in youth a reformer, 240; his *Princess*, 242, 306; supports Governor Eyre, 338
Terror, industrial, 96; royalist reign of, in England, 48
Test and Corporation Acts repealed, 147
Thackeray, W. M., as a reformer, 241; 306
Thirlwall, Bishop Connop, translates Schleiermacher's *St. Luke*, 132, and Niebuhr's *History of Rome*, 133; 193; at Cambridge, 197, 487
Thomson, James, author of *Seasons*, 55; author of *City of Dreadful Night*, 388
Thornton, W. T., refutes the Wages Fund theory, 343
Thuggee put down by Bentinck, 160
Tooke, Horne, prosecuted for high treason, 49
Tories, how distinguished from Whigs, 11; support the personal power of George III., 74; injured by opposing Catholic Emancipation, 75; and discredited by its concession, 148; unfounded claim of, to monopoly of factory legislation, 228 *sq.*
Toynbee, Arnold, quoted, 352
Tractarian movement, 186, 189 *sqq.*; end of, 192
Trade, British, increase of, during the French War, 92 *sq.*
Trade Union Bills, 365 *sqq.*; legislation under Conservatism, 396
Trade Unions, 340; promote strikes, 341; hostility of upper classes to, 344; judgment against, 350
Transvaal Republic, 417; annexed, *ibid.*; restored to independence, 443 *sq.*; re-annexed, 469
Trent affair, 299
Trevelyan, Sir Charles, advocates abolition of purchase in the Army, 381
Trevelyan, Sir George, advocates abolition of purchase in the Army, 381; in the Ministry of 1880, 423; proposes household suffrage in the counties, 440; resigns on Home Rule, 453; rejoins Gladstone, 458; his place among English historians, 490
Trollope, Anthony, 306, 389
Turkey, war between Russia and (1853), 259 *sqq.*; refuses to surrender Hungarian fugitives, 261; bankrupt, 403; war with Servia, 408; war with Russia (1877), 410 *sq.*
Turner, J. M. W., a romanticist in form and colour, 248
Tyndall, John, supports Governor Eyre, 338; his *Belfast Address*, 390

UNITARIANS, progressiveness of, 56
United States, power given to President of, 6, 290; Civil War in, *see* America
Universal empire, establishment of, resisted by England, 261
Universal suffrage and Socialism, 207
Universities, English, low state of, in the eighteenth century, 17, 22; their subsequent recovery, 84
University College, London, founded, 121
University tests repealed, 365
Utrecht, Treaty of, and the Slave Trade, 25

VATICAN COUNCIL, 364
Verona, Congress of, 108, 110
Victoria, Queen, 163; keeps Whigs in office, 183; dynastic

sympathies of, 287; sides with the North in the American War, 295; consents to abolition of army purchase, 381 *sq.*; made Empress of India, 401; helps her Ministers out of a deadlock, 442; against Home Rule, 455
Villafranca, Peace of, 285
Vimiero, Battle of, 78
Volunteer movement, 288

Wages during the Napoleonic War, 94
Wages Fund, theory of, 342 *sq.*
Wakefield, Gilbert, 163
Wales, Albert Edward, Prince of, political effect of his marriage, 303
Walewski supports Cavour at the Congress of Paris, 267
Wallace, A. R., joint discoverer of Natural Selection, 311; on Jamaica Committee, 338
Walpole, Sir Robert, 3, 8, 24
Walter, John, denounces the New Poor Law, 167
War with revolutionary France, 51, 53 *sq.*; with Napoleon, 71 *sqq.*; with Afghanistan (first), 224; with China (opium), 224 *sq.*; with Russia, 259 *sqq.*; with Persia, 268; with China (second), 268 *sq.*; Sepoy, 269 *sqq.*; Franco-Austrian, 278, 283, 285; American, 290 *sqq.*; Germano-Danish, 301 *sqq.*; Prusso-Austrian, 367; Franco-German, 373 *sqq.*; Turco-Servian, 408; Russo-Turkish, 411; second Afghan, 415 *sq.*; Zulu, 418 *sq.*; Egyptian, 445; in the Sudan, 447, 468; South African, 469; Russo-Japanese, *ibid.*
Ward, W. G., his place in the Tractarian movement, 190 *sq.*; submits to Rome, 192
Wardle, Colonel, disclosures of, in reference to the Duke of York, 79
Wellesley, Marquess, 75, 101
Wellington, Arthur Wellesley, Duke of, youth and training, 77 *sq.*; commands expedition to Portugal, 78; defeats Junot, *ibid.*; superseded, *ibid.*, 80; at Verona, 110; concedes Catholic Emancipation, 116 *sq.*; Prime Minister, 147; declares against Reform, 151; fall of his Ministry, *ibid.*; accepts office in 1832, 156; supports the New Poor Law, 167
Wesley, John, 35, 70
Westbury, Lord Chancellor, on eternal punishment, 324
Whately, Archbishop, favours joint religious instruction, 186; 193
Wheat, price of, during the French War, 93
Whewell, W., 198; his *History of the Inductive Sciences*, 232
Whigs, alleged oligarchic tendencies of, 9; their relation to modern Liberalism, 10; their view of the Peninsular War, 72; majority of, coalesce with Pitt, 73; their return to power, *ibid.*; benefit by supporting Catholic emancipation, 75; discredit and defeat of, under Melbourne, 183; Free Traders in theory, 212; free religious opinions of their leaders, 275; aristocratic exclusiveness of, 280
Whitbread, S., introduces Bill for free education, 85 *sq.*; suicide of, 106
Whitelocke, General, condemned for incapacity, 76
Wilberforce, Bishop Samuel, his encounter with Huxley, 312; on *Essays and Reviews*, 323
Wilberforce, William, 66; his *Practical View of Christianity*, 69; Sabbatarianism of, 117
William IV., character of, 148 *sq.*; an obstacle to Canadian

reform, 163; reactionary policy of, 182
Williams, bookseller, prosecuted for selling Paine's *Age of Reason*, 67
Williams, Prof. Rowland, his review of Bunsen, 322; prosecuted and acquitted, 324
Wilson, H. B., contributes to *Essays and Reviews*, 323; prosecuted and acquitted, 324
Wilson, Prof. John, 201
Windham, William, on the object of the war with France, 51; defends bull-baiting, 60; supports Catholic emancipation, 75; opposes popular education, 86
Winterbotham, W., persecution of, 48
Wiseman, Cardinal, 273 *sq.*, 276
Wolf, F. A., influence of his *Prolegomena*, 132
Wolff, Sir H. D., prevents Bradlaugh from being sworn, 424; member of the Fourth Party, 429
Wollstonecraft, Mary, 37
Wolseley, Viscount, conquers Egypt, 445
Women, modern, decline of genius among, 490 *sq.*
Wood, John, exposes evils of factory system, 169
Wordsworth, W., spy set on, 49; an enthusiast for the French Revolution, 57; a realist, 58; didactic tendency in, 59; his pamphlet on the Convention of Cintra, 80; advocates Parliamentary reform and a new course of education, *ibid.*; a political Radical till the end of the French War, 90; an anti-Catholic, 117 *sq.*; quoted, 479
Workhouses, unpopularity of, 167
Working classes, opinion of, on the American Civil War, 299; enfranchisement of, 347, 440 *sqq.*

YACOUB KHAN, 416
York, Duke of, an incapable commander, 53; charges brought against, as Commander-in-Chief, 79 *sq.*
Young, Thomas, his discoveries, 60, 61; fate of his undulatory theory of light, 87

ZULU WAR, 417 *sqq.*